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THE

BLACKSMITH OF ANTWERP.



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# THE BLACKSMITH OF ANTWERP.

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## CHAPTER I.

### QUINTEN, THE APPRENTICE.

It was on the last day of April, in the year 1468, that a young man, dressed in the garb of a blacksmith's apprentice, was seen standing with folded arms and with his back against the wall, beside the door of a small shop, which was situated in one of the most narrow and darksome streets of the far-famed city of Antwerp. During the whole day—for it was now near the hour of sunset—there had been a constant succession of sunshine and shower; the vanes on the housetops had shifted their positions at least fifty times; and the most capricious and feminine of all the months in the year, seemed determined to make her exit in the same manner, in which she had made her entrance. Her occasional frowns, however, only served to render her smiles the more enchanting; and the whole atmosphere was rife with that peculiar *vernal* odor, which, more than any thing else, inclines the youthful heart to posey and love.

The apprentice was remarkable for the symmetry of his form, and the uncommon beauty of his



countenance. His limbs were muscular and well rounded; his eyes blue, and full of fancy and feeling; his hair, blond, long, and gracefully curling adown his shoulders; his complexion fresh and blooming; the expression of his face frank, open and manly.

Quinten Metseys—for such was the name of the young blacksmith—stood gazing at a rainbow, which at that moment was above the sharp-roofed houses which stood on either side of the street; and so completely did he seem absorbed in the contemplation of this object, that it was not until the “colors of the showery arch” had entirely vanished from the sky, that he lowered his eyes to the earth, and resumed his ponderous hammer, which had rested idly against the wall.

“Heigho! I’ve spent an idle day of it. I suppose I must go to work again now, though it does go confoundedly against the grain. It’s an uphill business with me, I trow. I can remember the time when it was very different indeed—when I worked just as well when Hagendorf was absent, as when he was in the shop. But now—alack! alack! a strange alteration has come over me since then. I begin to fear that no good will come of it. Hagendorf? who’s he? A base mechanic, forsooth, a low-bred boorish blacksmith, who has not an idea beyond the clanking of his own hammer on the anvil. Hagendorf? faugh! Well—I sometimes think I’ll forge me a good broadsword, and a coat of mail, turn soldier, and serve under Charles the Bold, against the Swiss. To say the least of it, it were much better than beating out plow shares and shoeing horses. Who knows but



that in time I might become distinguished, might be promoted to the rank of officer, return after some years to my native city, and then—and then—ah! there's the point. Where would *she* be then, think you?"

Quinten had scarcely finished this soliloquy, and was again relapsing into a fit of silent musing, when a singular looking personage was seen hobbling along on the other side of the street. It was Peter Sneyders, whilome the fiddler and minstrel of Antwerp. Peter had but one eye and one leg. He was shaped like a spider, with stout pot-belly, a hump between his shoulders, a sharp gray beard cut in the shape of a dagger, a burnished red nose, and long snowy locks. His dress corresponded well with his grotesque figure. It consisted of a many-colored jerkin, fantastically adorned with ribbons; a high sugar-loafed hat, curiously hung round with little bells, like that of a morrice dancer; pappy-trunk hose, slashed with scarlet satin; and a buff belt, to which was attached a stout flask of brandy, and a lump or two of rosin, for keeping his fiddle-bow in order.

"Hark ye, youngster," cried the musical old toper, stopping suddenly short on his wooden leg, and eyeing the apprentice with a quizzical leer out of the corner of his single orb; for I verily believe his one eye expressed more than a hundred ordinary ones could have done; "hark ye, youngster, art crazy or in love, that thou standest there idling away the time, while thy comrade is toiling and moiling, and puffing and blowing, at anvil and bellows, at fire and fire-tongs? Come, come, Quinten, this is not fair, it is



not right—it is what I never would have expected from a lad of your spirit.”

Quinten made no answer. He had heard neither the loud voice nor the jingling bells of the merry fiddler. His mind was still on the all-absorbing topic. He continued his monologue in the following words :

“Yes, where would *she* be then, think you? No—no—that plan won’t do. I will become a soldier, but I must first obtain her love. Her love? impossible. I might as well presume to fall in love with an angel.” And here Quinten shook his head and looked pensive and woe-begone.

“Marry! and talking to himself, too? The boy’s in love, as sure as my name’s Peter. There’s no mistaking it. Poor fellow! I’ll speak to him, and try and give him some comfort. Halloo there, gentle lover, look up and answer me, or I swear by St. Alo, the patron saint of all true blacksmiths, that I’ll break thy head with my fiddle-bow.”

Still the absent lover paid no attention—still he continued sighing and muttering to himself, totally unconscious that any one was observing him. Peter Sneyders drew up his face to a point, placed his two hands at the corners of his mouth, gave a loud shrill whistle, spun around three times on his wooden leg, struck his palm against his forehead, and cried out :

“By the soul of my great grandfather! Now, that’s what I call sentimental progression.”

It was very evident that the little man was in liquor.

Quinten had caught sight of him during the gyration.



His countenance immediately relapsed into a smile. It would have made the most melancholy man laugh.

“Ha! it's *you*, is it, Master Sneyders? What are you spinning round like a top for? What would you have with me?”

“I wished to tell you,” answered Peter, walking over to the other side of the street; “that I've found out, that you're in love.”

“How?”

“Signs, my boy—signs that can't be mistaken. I know a story about a young blacksmith that was in love—ay, and a song to boot. Would you like to hear them?”

“Why, yes, Peter, provided they are short and sweet.”

“I'll insure you they shall be short. As to their being sweet, I can't say, as one man thinks bitter what another thinks like honey itself.”

“Let's hear them, then.”

“Well—once on a time, in this, our good city of Antwerp, a hosier's daughter fell in love with a young blacksmith. The smith's shop was exactly half a square distant from the hosiery. It was in Lowenh-veek street, mark ye—and so near were the two houses to each other, that the hosier's daughter could hear the sound of her lover's hammer whenever she chose, only by taking the trouble to put her little head outside her father's door. This she did at least a hundred times a day, I warrant you; for it was sweet music to the maiden's ear, God bless her. She'd rather have heard the sound of that hammer than the best violin in Antwerp. Wasn't that strange? And



if it ever so happened that she held her ear in the direction of the blacksmith's shop and didn't hear the usual clanking and clattering there, she would draw on her pretty black cloak—I think I see her now with her cheeks like roses, and her eyes like a pair of stars—she would draw on her black cloak, I say, and walk by the shop—but always on the other side of the street, mind ye, and only looking over now and then through the corner of her eye, like. Well, well—”

“Zounds, Peter, you told me we should have a short story, and—”

“So you have a short story, for the story's done. And now for the song. When the maiden found matters running on at this gate, she used often to sing to herself the following little catch, which is pretty good, considering the girl didn't know a letter in the book :

“Ho ! I hear my sweet !  
His hammer is swinging,  
His anvil is ringing ;  
Like merry bells chiming,  
The music is climbing  
Up alley and street.  
With eyes on the earth,  
He dreams himself nigh me ;  
But once let him spy me,  
His bellows then wakens,  
His old shop is shaken,  
And sparks fill the hearth.”\*

“Bravo,” cried Quinten, clapping his hands ; for it was not so much the poetry or the music that pleased him, as because old and familiar images were presented to his mind in a new light. “Bravo ! and what was the end of it Peter, did they marry ?”

\* This little song is a translation from the German of Uhland, one of the living Poets of Germany.



“Marry! ay faith, they did—and are living yet, as fat and merry as any man and wife in Antwerp. I knew the song would please you. Mark my word for it, Quinien, there’s nothing likes a good fiddle-string to tie up a broken heart with. Shall I sing you another?”

“Not at present, honest Peter.”

“What? shan’t I sing you the ballad of the Mermaid of Denmark?—how she fell in love with a young cavalier, and took him down with her in the deep sea—and how they rode about on sea horses—and how their saddles and bridles were made of sand—and how their palace was built of pearls, and diamonds, and precious stones? Shan’t I sing you that ballad, Master Quinten?”

“Some other time, Peter.”

“And why another time, pray? Isn’t to-morrow the first of May, and won’t we have a May-pole outside of the city walls, and won’t the Fairy Queen and all her merry company be dancing all this blessed night beside the glassy waters of the Scheldt—and isn’t it the business of the fairies to assist and befriend all gentle youths who are crossed in love? Tell me that, Master Quinten, answer me that? Oh! I could sing you such a pretty ditty about a youngster—he wasn’t a bit better off than you, Quinten. He was a sail-maker, and lived at the Hague. Well—he slept one night in a fairy circle. The next morning, when he woke up, he found himself dressed like a knight, feather in his cap, and golden spurs on his heels, and—but now comes the cream of the story. Can’t you guess the rest, Master Quinten?”



“ You know I’m no ballad-monger, Peter.”

“ You can’t guess it, hey? Then I’ll bid you good evening. I am going to-night to play at the house of a rich man, and a baron, to boot. By the mass! there’ll be cutting of pigeon-wings there, I ween. Farewell, Master Quinten.”

And the old man took his departure, stamping along the pavement on his wooden leg, and ever and anon stopping to recreate himself with a tune on his fiddle—on which occasion he never failed to attract a crowd around him, and to earn something which he valued much more highly than empty praise, or profitless shouts of applause.

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## CHAPTER II.

### QUINTEN’S HOME AND FAMILY.

WHILE this scene was taking place at the blacksmith’s shop, the mother and sister of our hero were pursuing their usual avocations in a small, old-fashioned house, situated in one of the distant suburbs. The same chamber served them for parlor, kitchen, and dining-room. Instead of plaster, the walls were hung around with a species of stamped leather, then said to have been very common in the Netherlands. Every object bespoke neatness, cleanliness, and domestic comfort. Deep rush-bottomed chairs stood



against the wall; a huge black pot simmered over the fire; a sleepy tabby-cat sat purring in the chimney corner.

The mother, a fine, hearty old dame, with florid cheeks and double chin, sat, as usual, at her spinning-wheel, the very picture of health and contentment, sometimes glancing affectionately at her daughter, and sometimes smiling benevolently at the gambols of a sportive kitten, which was busily engaged in pursuing its own tail.

Rosa Metseys, the sister of Quinten, was as much like her mother, as a girl of sixteen could be like a matron of fifty. She bore, also, a strong family likeness to her brother. She had light laughing eyes, a fresh blooming complexion, a finely formed neck, dimpled arms, and beautifully turned ankles. What more could a girl of sixteen need, to render her the most pleasing object in creation? But Rosa *had* more. She had, I don't know how many petticoats, which swelled her up to the size of a hogshead—and beside this, a tidy blue apron, and a head-tier of scarlet net-work, decked off with gaudy tassels, and a pair of the prettiest slippers that ever were seen, all worked and embroidered by her own fair fingers. These last, however, she wore but seldom, and now only in honor of the approaching festival; for on working days, Rosa was accustomed to stamping about in a pair of wooden shoes.

“By my troth, mother,” said Rosa, looking out of the window; “I think thou hast worked enough for to-day; for lo, the sun is sinking in the west, and if I am not mistaken, the fairies will, ere long,



commence tripping their merry measures by the river's side. Prithee, put thy spinning-wheel by in the corner, and rest thee after thy day's labor. Should a stray bevy of fairies chance to be hovering over us at present, thinkest thou not, they would be enraged to see us so little observant of their favorite festival?"

"Fairies! say you," answered the dame, ceasing from her work, and obeying the request of her daughter; "it is many a long day since I have put any faith in fairy tales, or had any expectation of fairy favors. And yet I remember well, how, some twenty years ago—I was then a gay dairy maid, Rosa, about your own size and make—how I was wont, I say, to deck off my milk-house with fresh smelling mint, and lay my shoe at night in the corner, with the hope of finding it full of gold pieces in the morning. But tell me, Rosa, have you heard your brother say how he intends spending his May holiday?"

"What? do you mean Quinten, mother?"

"Silly girl!" answered the dame, "and pray what other brother have you but Quinten, that you ask such a foolish question?"

"Pardon me," rejoined the simple maiden, "but of late Quinten does not seem like a brother to me; and so strangely is he altered, that I can scarce bring myself to believe that we were born of the same parents. Now, I lay you a wager, that he shuts himself up in his own little room to-morrow, the whole enduring day, scarcely taking time to swallow down his dinner, and not so much as cracking a single joke from sunrise till eventide. He used to romp with me, and kiss me, and help me to feed my



red birds ; but now he takes no more notice of me than if I were a cat. I caress my cat a hundred times more than *he* does *me*."

"So, you don't think he will dance at the May-pole to-morrow, Rosa?"

"Not a step, mother."

"Nor shoot at the target?"

"Never a shaft, mother."

"Nor visit the ball-alley?"

"Not go near it."

"And not wrestle, either?"

"No mother, unless it is with his own shadow."

"What has become of all his pigeons?"

"Flying on the four winds of heaven, for aught *I* know,"

"And his dogs?"

"At the bottom of the Scheldt, for aught *he* cares."

"And his quarter staff?"

"Turned to a broomstick."

"And his brave falcons, which he once took so much pleasure in training?"

"Sold, mother, to buy himself musty parchments, instead."

"Alas! it's all too true, Rosa," answered the old matron sighing, and wiping from her cheek a falling tear. "It is all too true. He is indeed strangely altered. He used to be a lad of such life and spirit—so full of fun and frolic—had such a hearty laugh, such a sunny smile. And if now and then his mad-cap spirit *did* lead him into a brawl or a scrape; if he was rather too fond of bear-baiting, and cock



fighting, and cudgel-playing—why, what of that, Rosa? Wasn't his father so, before him? And does not a wild colt always make the best horse? Now, may heaven forgive me, if the thought be sinful, but I must say, I would a hundred times rather see him over a foaming tankard of beer, with a set of merry companions in a tavern, than to have him moping about the house of a holiday, and shutting himself up in his lonely room, more like a monk in a cloister, than a jolly apprentice of Antwerp. Mark my words for it, there's something wrong behind all this. It grieves my poor old heart—it does, indeed."

And then the fond mother wiped her eyes with the end of her apron, and remained for a long time in silence. But no sooner was vesper bell heard ringing from the spire of the cathedral, than the pious matron donned her black cloak, took up her rosary, and hastened to offer prayers before the shrine of the Virgin, and in an especial manner to call down blessings on the head of that dear son, in whom all her hopes and affections were centered.

When Dame Metseys took her departure, Rosa sat herself down on a deep leather-bottomed chair, with her eyes fixed on the burning peat, and fell into a deep revery about her brother, and her dead father, and her industrious mother, and about her holiday dresses, and the fairies, and the coming festival, and a hundred other things, until at last her thoughts settled on that subject, which of all others, is the most interesting to a maiden of sixteen—and that was her *first love*. The object of her attachment was a handsome and promising young man by the name



of Jean Hoffmeyer. He was, by trade, a *carver in oak*; at that time a most honorable and lucrative employment, and one that required great slight of hand, and no inconsiderable force of imagination. It was, in fact, one of the fine arts, and afforded scope for almost as great an exhibition of genius, as sculpture or painting.

Every traveler who has had the good fortune to ramble through the Netherlands, will at once recollect the beautiful pulpit in the cathedral at Antwerp, with its quaint and fantastic ornaments in wood, its birds, beasts, and foliage, all so minutely and elaborately executed, so gracefully grouped, and so full of allegorical meaning. There are others in the same style, at Ghent, Brussels, and Bruges; all perfect master-pieces in their way. And here, did time permit, I would gladly enlarge on this interesting topic, and make a few remarks on a branch of art which seems to have sunk into almost total decay. And thus it is with us old travelers, when we happen to alight on some pleasing recollections, connected with our way-faring in foreign lands, we would fain dovetail them into our stories, even at the risk of becoming tedious.

Suffice it for the present, to know that Hoffmeyer was considered at that time, the "most cunning" workman in wood in the whole Netherlands. And what is more, his master had lately died, an old bachelor, and had left him his tools, his shop, and a considerable property; so that Rosa's prospects were, in fact, unusually promising and sunny.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE PRETTY FLOWER GIRL.

IN the mean time, Quinten Metseys, had no sooner taken leave of Peter Sneyders, than he was accosted by a person widely different, both in appearance and character. This was no other than Clara Onderdonk, the pretty flower-girl; and as she is destined to act a prominent part in our little drama, we take pleasure in bringing her on the stage, and in politely requesting for her a courteous and indulgent hearing.

Clara was a fresh-looking country lass, pranked off in her best holiday garb; her bosom and waist encircled by a trim bodice, her cap ornamented with flaunting ribbons, and her feet covered with those large *sabots*, or wooden shoes, still worn by the peasantry in many parts of Europe. On her left arm she held a basket filled with early spring flowers; and on her right, another containing a brace of living pigeons, which were prevented from flying away, by having their feet tethered with slender cords. The maiden came within speaking distance, made a low curtsy, and then, half-smiling, half-blushing, with a fascinating mixture of rural simplicity and archness, of which we can convey but a faint idea, (for much depends, in such matters, on tone, and look, and manner,) at once entered upon the following conversation:



“Good evening to you, Master Blacksmith. What! you haven’t forgot Clara, I hope—her that you’ve danced with many a bright May-day, and sunny holiday, on the green banks of the Scheldt?”

“Heaven forbid that I should ever forget such a sweet girl as Clara Onderdonk,” answered the apprentice, still leaning on his huge hammer, and relapsing into a smile which added much to the charms of his singularly striking countenance. “You live in the same little hut still, do you, Clara?”

“In the same little hut under the willow-trees, four miles the other side of the river,” answered the pretty flower-girl. “And now, good Master Quinten, I must tell you my business. Don’t you want to buy a brace of beautiful pigeons? Here they are, look at them—ain’t they charming?”

“Very beautiful, Clara, very?”

“You may well say that, sir. They are of a choice breed, I assure you. None like them in the neighborhood of Antwerp. Their parents were brought over the seas, and sold to my mother by an old Portuguese sailor. You should buy them, sir, if for nothing else than to get into the breed.”

“Alas, Clara, I have long since lost all delight in such toys.”

“I hope you don’t mean to say, sir, that you take no more pleasure in training carrier-pigeons?” asked the girl, with an air of simple astonishment.

“No more, sweet Clara, no more.”

“Lord, and I suppose you don’t dance at the village *fêtes* neither, nor leap any more around the May-pole? Listen. I’ll tell you what mother said



to me to-day after dinner. 'Clara,' says she, 'you must take them there young pigeons to the city and sell them.' 'Oh no, mother,' says I, 'I can't sell 'em—I can't, and I won't. They've eaten out of my hand, and mother—they have slept in my bosom. How can I sell them?' 'You shall, and you must,' answered my mother. 'And pri'thee, who shall I sell them to, then?' 'To young Master Quinten Metseys,' says she, 'the young blacksmith's apprentice. He loves pigeons; he'll buy them. He's fond of sport. Go sell them to him.' So I thought, sir, I'd just call at your shop, and see if you wanted them."

"But why is your mother so anxious to sell them, when she finds you so loth to part with them?" asked Quinten, who began to suspect, from the girl's blushes, how matters stood.

"Why she's so anxious to sell them, you asked, did you, sir?"

"Yes, Clara, that was my question."

"Why—it's only because—oh, nothing—it's nothing—only at this present time, we're selling off every thing we can spare. You must know, Master Quinten, we're going to have a—a—"

"A wedding, I presume, Clara. But don't blush so. There is nothing so uncommon in a wedding."

"Well, Master Quinten, since you've guessed it, I'll tell you. We *are* to have a wedding—and you know such things can't go forward well without money."

Very few things in this world can," answered Quinten. "But pray tell me, Clara, who's to be the



bridegroom, for, as to the bride, it's easy to guess who *she* is."

"Well, since you know so much," answered Clara, blushing still more deeply, "I'll e'en tell you all. I am soon to be married (God willing,) to young farmer Borsh. You know him, don't you? He lives five miles the other side of my mother's cottage—away out of sight of Antwerp—but not so far off neither, but that one can sometimes hear the sound of the cathedral bells, and the sweet *carillon*, which is rung all night long in time of Lent."

"Farmer Borsh?" repeated Quinten, with the air of one who is endeavoring to call to mind what he has nearly forgotten. "Farmer Borsh? Let me see. Oh! I recollect him now. House stands by a canal—roof covered with tile—barn painted—small stone dairy—"

"The same, Master Quinten. The whole farm is made up of rich meadows, divided from each other by little canals. And then you ought to see how many pretty cows he has—some red, some white some spotted, and how they graze about all day up to their dewlaps in clover, or stand chewing the cud by the wayside. And then their lowing, Quinten, their lowing—of a clear morning you can hear them a mile off."

"It is indeed a sweet spot, Clara."

"Both sweet and quiet, Master Quinten. The meadows all covered with daisies and ladysmocks. And then, the old wind-mill on the other side of the barn—how it whirls and crackles of a gusty day. Lord! you'd think it was alive. You'd take it for



some huge bird just going to fly off with its big wings. But pray tell me. You used to look so gay and smiling—you're so completely changed. What's the matter with you?"

Quinten gave a deep sigh, and hung down his head, but said nothing.

"If you'll allow me, I think I can tell you what will make you happy and gay again;" said the flower-girl.

"What, Clara?"

"Why, come out into the country to live, and marry some rich farmer's daughter. You'd like it better than living in this dark, narrow street, where you can't see a beam of God's bright sun the whole blessed day, and where you're surrounded with sparks and covered with soot, and your ears stunned from morning till night with the clanking of irons. You'd like it better than all this, I know you would. And then what merry hay-making, what joyous fruit-gatherings in autumn, what dewy mornings, what quiet nights."

"On my soul, Clara, you almost make me in love with a farmer's life."

"But, in the mean time," said the flower-girl, again holding up the basket which contained the birds, "what say you to purchasing my pigeons? Come—I'll tell you what my little brother John said to me before I left home. Says he, 'Clara, when you take your birds to sell, the best thing you can do will be to sing him a song.' 'What song?' says I. 'Why, I'll teach you. And if that don't bring the money out of him, I wish I may be eternally obfuscated!'



Oh! how you'd laugh to hear John talk. He uses so many queer words."

"But the song, Clara, let's hear the song."

"Oh, I'm afraid you'll laugh at it. It's so simple and silly; though I suppose it the best Johnny could make, poor boy."

And to confess the truth, courteous reader, I am like Clara, and feel almost afraid to submit so simple and artless a ditty to the inspection of eyes which have been accustomed to more finished and glowing productions. But, poor and spiritless as they may appear, when staring at you from the dead letter of the printed page, I am well convinced reader, that, if thou hadst seen Clara herself, while she was singing them, if thou hadst marked the ever-varying but ever-beautiful play of her features, so full of innocence and feeling; if thou couldst have watched her motions, while she was caressing the beautiful birds, now letting them fly to the extent of their little cords, now putting them together to make them kiss each other, then pressing them on her bosom, then smoothing down their plumes, then spanning their little necks with her thumb and finger—and the effect of the whole heightened by the maiden's bright and picturesque costume—hadst thou seen all this, thou wouldst have thanked little Johnny Onderdonk for the verses, and have greeted the blooming Clara with three hearty cheers.

And here, should any fair lady happen to honor this unpretending tale with a perusal, I would call her attention to a single circumstance with regard to the pigeons themselves. They were the very



counterpart of those classical birds, thou bearest on a cameo as an ornament to thy bosom, the original of which was dug up from the ruins of Adrian's once magnificent villa.

"But the song, Clara, I protest, I must hear it," repeated the apprentice, whose melancholy feelings were fast giving way before the artless prattle of the pretty flower-girl."

Clara hemmed a little, hung down her head a little, blushed a little, and then went off, like a lark chanting its matin song:

Behold them how they bill and coo,  
And they can fly and flutter too;  
See! this one's wings are painted blue;  
Oh! won't you buy my pigeons, Sir?

And, Master Blacksmith, you must know,  
On both their necks a bright rain-bow,  
Is often seen to come and go;  
Oh! won't you buy my pigeons, Sir?

*This one* I think is prettiest;  
But *that one* loves its mistress best,  
See how he nestles on my breast  
Oh! won't you buy my pigeons, Sir?

"A very pretty song, Clara, and very well sung," said Quinten, taking the pigeons from the flower-girl, and at the same time pulling out his purse of gold

"Thank you, sir," said Clara, "but, Lord! what have you given me? Why, this is enough to buy twenty pigeons with."

"Keep it, Clara, they're worth it; it will help to buy you a wedding gown."

The pretty flower-girl put the money in her pocket, thanking the generous apprentice again and again, and then bade him good evening, and took her departure. Quinten again fell into a deep revery, again



commenced talking to himself, and in the vehemence of his feelings, began to gesticulate and stamp on the ground.

“Zounds! but the fellow paws the earth, like a horse that has the bots,” said a short, bandy-legged, blue-eyed, broad-faced lad, with high cheek-bones and short cropped hair, who stood peeping at Metseys from the shop-door. It was Crumbein, his brother apprentice, a good natured, obliging fellow, who loved a sly joke at the expense of his friend, and who, though bold enough in a brawl in the street, was very much afraid of his master in the shop. Unlike Quinten, he had not a hope nor a wish beyond the simple but honest calling in which he had engaged both heart and hand; and to become a good blacksmith was the height of Crumbein’s ambition, and perhaps, too, of his capacity.

We forgot to mention that Hagendorf, the owner of the shop, and the master of the two lads, had been absent the whole day on business, and was every moment expected back.

“Hark ye, my lad,” said Crumbein, “shall I tell you a secret?”

“The foul fiend seize *you* and your secrets, too,” answered Quinten, rather angrily.

“Nay, if you fly in such a passion with your old comrade and bellows-companion——But tell me, Quinten, wouldn’t you like to hear a secret, indeed?”

“Out with it, then.”

“It’s this,” answered Crumbein, with the air and manner of a low-born wag. “I guess I know who *won’t* get a scolding when my master comes home.



Look at these, will you?" and he here held up a parcel of horse-shoes and nails for his companion's inspection; "and yon coultter, and that there plowshare—all hammered out by my own right hand. Now pray, tell me, what can *you* show for your day's work, old fellow? And who was it shod old farmer Mindenhout's mare? Who burnt the lampers out of Hugh Baldung's dun filly? Who put the tiers on Jack Walsh's new cart wheels? It wasn't *me*, I s'pose. And who was it, Quinten Metseys, that in driving a nail in the hoof of the burgomaster's best riding horse, so horribly pricked him, that I believe, on my soul, he'll go lame for a fortnight? Now, if I was disposed to blab, I could tell some pretty tales on you to my master, couldn't I? But this here child is no tell-tale—no body ever accused me of that, or ever shall. Come, come, Quinten, don't bridle up so and look so proud, or I will tell him in good earnest. Look here, shall I tell you what Doll Hoffmeyer said of you the other day? Havn't forgot Doll, I hope—the pretty bar-maid of the Golden Lamb? Well—says she to me, 'what's become of Quinten Metseys now-a-days? They tell me he's given up going to taverns and beer-houses?' 'Yes,' says I, 'that's all true.' Then says she, 'I'll tell you what I think of him. He's not worth a sailor's yarn.' 'Come, come, Doll,' says I, 'you—'

"A truce with this idle gabble, I beg you," said Quinten. "Listen, Crumbein, I'll tell you a secret that I've not yet whispered to any one. For the last two or three days I have been burning up with a fire ten times hotter than that in yonder furnace."



And as he spoke the last words he entered the shop, and pointed in the direction of the object.

“*I* say, fire,” answered Crumbein, with that peculiar tone often used by people in his sphere of life. “You must be crazy, boy. Let Hagendorf hear one of his apprentices talking in this way!”

“To the devil with Hagendorf and his slavish trade!” cried Quinten, stamping up and down the shop in a passion.

And lo, and behold, at the very moment, the master himself made his appearance. He was a bluff, surly looking fellow, with a jaw like a bull dog’s, and a fist like a hammer—and certainly *did* look like a dangerous man to handle.

“Halloo, what’s all this uproar about? Is he mad, or is he drunk?”

“Neither drunk, nor mad, sir,” answered Quinten, “and what is more, sir, I’ll let you know that I’ll put up with none of your impudence.”

“Pretty talk, this,” growled Hagendorf, doubling up his fist, and advancing toward the apprentice; “I’ll pretty soon show you who’s to be master here, and who’s the slave.”

“Slave! I’m the slave of no man.”

And at it they went, rough and tumble, up and down, each too intent on inflicting blows, to think of warding them off, and each exhibiting feats of strength and agility that would not have disgraced regular boxers. The conflict was for a long time doubtful. At last Quinten succeed in knocking the master down, where he lay for some time like a dead ox. When he arose, Quinten Metseys had disappeared.



Crumbein stood crouching in one corner, as pale as a sheet.

“What’s become of the villain?” asked Hagedorf, grinding his teeth, and wiping the blood from his forehead.

“He just this moment left the shop, sir.”

“Mark me, Crumbein. Come with me to a magistrate. You must be witness. You must swear that he tried to murder his master. Before to-morrow morning he must be clapped in prison; and perhaps it will end by his going to the gallows—the villain!” Crumbein had never in his life been known to disobey his master. They left the shop together.

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## CHAPTER IV.

### QUINTEN AND HIS SISTER.

AFTER the incident recorded in the last chapter, Quinten Metseys made the best of his way home, where he found his sister, Rosa, seated in the same high-backed, leather-bottomed chair, in which he last left her. She was much startled at her brother’s appearance, for his face was covered with blood, his cheek flushed, and eye wild and excited. He related in a few brief and hurried words, the particulars of his fight with Hagedorf; and it was not until he



assured her that he was not a murderer, that the affrighted girl breathed freely.

“No, sister,” continued Quinten, in a rapid tone, “he is not murdered, thank God; I only bruised him a little, and knocked him down; and just as I was leaving the shop, I thought I heard him muttering something about prison, punishment, and the rigor of the law. I must fly immediately. I must leave Antwerp. You know the laws relating to apprentices are very strict. I must fly this very night. But listen—I will first tell you a tale, which will explain some mysteries, which have of late sorely puzzled both yourself and our good mother.

“Do, Quinten,” said Rosa, hanging on him affectionately, “do. But pray make haste. The officers may be in the house before you have finished.”

“Never fear that,” answered Quinten. “The good magistrates of Antwerp were never yet known to be in a hurry, and scarce know the meaning of the word. But listen—I will tell you all. It is now some eighteen months ago since the incident occurred which has decided the destiny of my life. It was a hot summer’s day. I was alone in the shop; for, being noon, Hagendorf had gone to his dinner, and Crombein was confined to his bed by sickness. We had that day more work on hand than usual; so I was very busy indeed; sometimes hammering away at the anvil, sometimes blowing the bellows, sometimes—but why should I make a short story long? Obligated to go out of the shop for an instant, I glanced my eyes up and down the street. Not a soul was stirring, every one had either gone to dinner, or had



taken refuge in the house from the intense heat of the sun. But presently I heard the tramp of a horse's hoofs, apparently in full gallop. It came in the direction of the shop. It came nearer and nearer. Ere long a palfry appeared in sight, which seemed to have taken fright, and was dashing furiously with its rider. The rider was a lady."

"Ha! Anna Van Vriedt—the painter's daughter. I have heard something of the story before, and you may recollect, Quinten, that we have often questioned you about it, but—"

"But I never gave you any satisfaction," said Quinten; "but now, Rosa, I will make amends for it. I'll tell you all. When I saw the horse rushing on at this furious rate, I planted myself in the middle of the street, and extended both arms, with the hopes of stopping him. You know the street, Brabant—it's very winding and narrow. The horse came forward at full speed—when he came within a few feet of where I was standing, he made a sudden halt, wheeled rapidly round, threw the lady violently on the pavement, kicked up his heels, and galloped off. I flew instantly to her relief. She was stunned by the fall and completely insensible. I took her in my arms, bore her to the shop, and endeavored to revive her, by sprinkling her temples with cold water. All to no purpose. There she lay, as pale as a lily, and as motionless as marble. 'Good God!' cried I, 'she's dead, she has ceased to breath. No, no. It is impossible any thing so beautiful can ever die—she's an angel.' I placed my lips upon her's, to find if she still breathed; I laid my hand on her heart to see if it



still beat. Imagine my rapture, Rosa, when I discovered that the vital principle was still there—that there was still room for hope. You recollect many years ago, my uncle Hans, who is a barber, taught me how to bleed, and gave me a lancet, which I have ever since carried in my pocket. The thought flashed upon me, that bleeding might restore her to consciousness. I had heard of such things before. So I made bare her arm—oh, Rosa, if you had seen that arm, so round, so soft, so snowy white. To give more free circulation to the blood, I loosened the dress about her neck and bosom. The bandage was soon tied, the vein soon pierced—the blood began to trickle slowly down. Then seating myself on the bench, I held her in my arms, and gazed with intense delight on her face. Her lips were pale, her eyes closed, her cheek colorless.”

“Proceed, my brother,” said Rosa, who had listened with profound interest, to the story. “You seem wrapt in thought. You have no time to lose. Let me hear the whole.”

“At last,” continued Quinten, starting from his reverie, “her long silken eye-lashes moved—the color came back slowly to her lips, to her cheek—her bosom began to heave gently—it was as though a beautiful statute of marble were starting into life. I was intoxicated with pleasure—folded her close and closer to my bosom, pressed my lips upon her’s; I was perfectly and supremely happy. Ah! Rosa, it was the most delicious moment of my life—if I could live till the end of the world, I never could have such another—no, Rosa, never, never.”



“Again, dear brother, you seem sinking into a revery,” said the simple girl, blushing deeply at the somewhat too warm, and highly colored language of the lover. “Hasten, oh hasten. I fear the officers will be here. Hark! there’s a noise on the street. I hear horsemen; I hear carriages. Thank heaven, they pass.”

“Well,” continued Quinten; “At last she opened her bright eyes, as if awakening from a dream, and fixed them wildly on my face. It was then that my joy for her recovery began to give way to bashfulness. I felt the blood mount into my cheeks; I reflected on my situation. Was it not strange, Rosa? say, sister, was it not strange, that a sooty blacksmith’s apprentice should hold in his arms the most beautiful lady of Antwerp—a Baron’s daughter?—that these hands, which had that very day been holding the hoofs of cart-horses—feel them, Rosa, are they not hard? look at them, are they not black?—that these hands, I say, should have clasped that tender cherub form? There she lay, with her gold ear-rings, and her diamond necklace, and her rich satins, and her glossy silks, resting on my lap, clasped in my arms; and I had dared—I, a low-born blacksmith, even then reeking with the fumes of the smithy—yes, I (’twas wonderful, Rosa,) had dared to press the lips of Antwerp’s peerless beauty.”

“Just then her servant, who had been at some distance behind her when the horse took fright, rode up to the shop, dismounted, and entered. I dispatched him home in quest of a carriage in all haste, and—”

“Excuse me for the interruption, Quinten. You



can tell me the rest some other time. For heaven's sake, remain no longer—fly—fly! But whither will you go?"

"To Ghent."

"To Ghent?—no, no—that is too near. You must go into France; you must pass the frontier. Take all the money at present in the house, and fly. But stop. Is there no way of concealing you—have you no friend in whose house you could hide until—"

"Rosa, a thought has just this moment struck me. I will go, this very, night to see Anna Van Vriedt. You must accompany me. I will throw myself on her protection. Look here. This very ring was sent to me soon after her recovery—it was accompanied by a note requesting, nay, entreating me to call on herself or her father, if ever I should need their protection or assistance. She also sent, at the same time, a purse of gold. Come, let us go. I fear, myself, we are lingering too long—"

When Quinten and his sister reached the street, they found it already growing dark; the lamplighters with torch and ladders, were going their rounds; strolling bands of revellers and maskers, ever and anon passed by with shout and halloo; groups of noisy boys were collected at the corners of the street; morrice-dancers and ballad-singers were exercising their lungs and their heels; and every thing they saw and heard, announced the eve of a great popular festival, and of a return of those joyous annual rites, by which, in days of yore, all the northern nations of Europe were accustomed to usher in the first of May.



## CHAPTER V.

## THE LETTER AND PICTURE.

AT the time when the incidents took place, which we are at present engaged in recording, the city of Antwerp had not reached the preëminence in commerce and opulence, to which she attained a few years later. Ghent and Bruges, (but particularly the latter,) were both of them superior to her, as well in point of wealth as in political importance. But she was already beginning to exhibit signs of her future greatness; and already many of her wealthy burghers and flourishing merchants began to look forward with rapture to the time, when she should far outstrip her sister cities; and they were more encouraged in this hope, when they reflected on the chastisement which those places had so often drawn down on themselves by their overweening pride and haughtiness. Only a short time had elapsed, since twenty thousand of the most respectable citizens of Ghent, had been compelled to go bare-footed, bare-headed, and dressed only in their shirts, and in this humble plight to advance a mile beyond the city gates, and there, on bended knees, beg the forgiveness of Philip, Duke of Burgundy. In addition to this disgraceful humiliation, they were, at the same time, deprived of many of their former rights and municipal privileges. Bruges, too, at the same time, began to evince much of



that "pride which goeth before a fall," and gave many marked symptoms of that decline which twenty years later overtook her in good earnest, when she was so severely punished by the Emperor Frederick, for having dared to imprison his son Maximilian, then Archduke of Austria, and Regent of the Netherlands. The agents of the Hanseatic Confederacy had already begun to give Antwerp the preference; silks from Italy, and wool from England, arrived every day in larger quantities in her port; a constantly increasing number of vessels from all nations entered into or departed from her harbor; and while her citizens noted, with pleasure, these unerring indications of her rising grandeur, they naturally imbibed all that buoyancy of spirit, and youthful hope, which usually belong to the inhabitants of a rapidly flourishing city.

But our business at present is not with the rise or fall of cities or empires, but with the fortunes of our youthful apprentice; and we have mentioned these things more for the purpose of giving the reader a better insight into the state of society then prevailing at Antwerp, than because we deemed them absolutely necessary to the proper comprehension of our story. Philip de Comines, who traveled through the Netherlands, about the middle of the fifteenth century, has given a striking picture of the luxury, as well as dissoluteness, which pervaded all orders of society; and should the reader feel any curiosity on this subject, I would recommend him to consult the pages of that amusing, though somewhat gossiping, author.

We must now usher the reader into the splendid



mansion at this time occupied by Baron Van Vriedt, a man of considerable wealth, and universally allowed to be the most celebrated painter in the Netherlands. In a magnificent saloon, tastefully furnished with sofas, ottomans, cut-velvet chairs, pictures, pier-glasses, and an abundance of that gorgeous tapestry, for which the Low Countries were, even then, remarkable, sat the Baron's daughter, Anna Van Vriedt, in company with her servant and handmaiden, the laughter-loving Mary Meyerly. The lady herself was dressed in the height of the fashion then prevalent in her country ; and however much a modern belle might be disposed to criticise the immense starched ruff, which entirely concealed from view both neck and bosom—the disproportionate length of the waist—the endless train, which, “like a wounded snake, dragged its slow length along”—and the enormously high-heeled shoes, which effectually prevented her from standing plum on her feet—yet I believe Anna Van Vriedt would have been beautiful, and would have felt herself perfectly at her ease, in any dress she may have chosen to assume. Beside, the materials of which her garments were composed, were of the most costly and precious character. Silks, satins, laces, jewels, rings, coral, silver, and gold, all contributed their share to the magnificence, even if they did not add to the beauty of her appearance.

“I wonder what can keep my father out so late to-night,” said the Baron's daughter, as she stood before a marble table, busily engaged in arranging flowers in an alabaster vase ; an operation in which she was assisted by Mary Meyerly. “He is not wont



to stay from home so late. He knows, too, that this is his birth-night, which he ever celebrates as an annual festival. The saloon is all prepared; the refreshments ready; the guests every moment expected, still he does not make his appearance."

"I pray you, my lady, don't be uneasy," answered Mary Meyerly; "perhaps he has met with some new picture; and you know your father hovers round a picture, as a butterfly does round a flower. By the way, speaking of pictures, reminds me that one was left here to-day, directed to your ladyship; but such was the hurry and bustle of preparation for to-night's *fête*, that I laid it aside, and forgot to mention it."

"Was it brought by the same unknown messenger who delivered the others?"

"The same, my lady."

"Did he say nothing?"

"I did not see him, my lady. As usual he consigned the present to the hands of the servant, and then instantly took his departure. The picture was also accompanied by a small note."

"Which you were very remiss in not presenting to me at the moment," answered the lady, rather pettishly. "Run, girl, and bring them both here directly. Such thoughtlessness is really provoking."

And all the time Mary Meyerly was gone after the picture, Anna Van Vriedt continued to express her thoughts aloud—it had grown into a habit with her.

"Now, I would give one of my eyes," she said, to find out who this young painter can be, who for the last year has constantly been presenting me with pictures. That he is a lover, is very clear; that he



will some day become a great artist, is, I think, equally certain. 'Tis true his first productions were, at best, but miserable daubs ; but he has ever since been daily improving, and that, with a rapidity truly astonishing. His last piece elicited applause even from my father, who is generally considered the best judge of such matters in all the Low Countries ; perhaps, in the whole of Europe. Let me see, what was the subject of it ? Oh, ah ! the Giant of Antwerp. He was represented cutting off the hand of a poor smuggler—who—but here comes Mary."

The picture was concealed by an envelope—Mary removed it, and the lady Van Vriedt had no sooner caught sight of the figure, than she blushed deeply, and exclaimed :

" Good heavens ! can this be possible ! Quick, Mary, give me the letter."

It ran as follows ,

" DEAREST LADY :—The picture which accompanies this hasty scrawl, is an attempt to portray a scene, which I hope you will at once recognize. It has been painted from recollection—but from a recollection which becomes more dear and vivid every moment of my existence. I will no longer conceal from you the fact, that the poor blacksmith, who once did you a kind service, is one and the same person with the poor limner, who now offers you another proof of his little skill, with profound adoration. Receive the offering, and forgive the boldness of your devoted servant and worshiper,

" QUINTEN METSEYS."

" Impossible !" said the lady, looking alternately at



the picture and letter—"impossible ! A blacksmith's apprentice paint such a picture as that ? Look, Mary, observe the coloring, the attitudes, the expression !"

"Yes, and the likeness, too," rejoined Mary, with a smile.

"It was a bold thought though, Mary, for a poor mechanic to send such a picture and such a letter to the daughter of a Baron. What will my father say to it, think you ?"

"He will say it is beautiful," answered Mary, first looking at the picture and then at her mistress. "Look at that arm—how admirably rounded ; and then the blood—did you ever see any thing flow more naturally ?"

"And the breathless interest expressed in the young man's countenance," said the lady.

"And the pale face of the fainting lady," continued Mary Meyerly ; "he holds her in his arms. She has not yet opened her eyes—the long lashes touch her cheek—her lips are as pale as death. But why do you blush, my lady ?"

"Quinten Metseys ! impossible, impossible !" cried Anna Van Vriedt, keeping her eyes fixed musingly on the painting.

"It is indeed strange," continued Mary. "Two years ago, before I entered into your ladyship's service, I knew him well. His mother lives in Mechlin street, opposite the old hosier's, Hans Copenhole. She makes her living by her spinning wheel—she and her daughter Rosa. Ah ! pretty Rosa Metseys—I have not seen *her* this many a day ; for you know, lady, when one lives with the rich and noble, one has to



give up one's poor acquaintances. Rosa Metseys! She was then the merriest, and the rosiest, and the prettiest girl in all Antwerp—an eye the color of heaven, and brimful of laughter and joyousness.”

“And her brother, Quinten, what kind of a youth was *he*, Mary?”

“He? a madcap, roistering apprentice, my lady. The best wrestler, the gayest dancer, the most adroit archer, the swiftest rower in all Antwerp—the first at pitching the bar, the best at heaving the quoit. An arrant nine-pin player was this Quinten, my lady. He used to train carrier-pigeons—teach water-dogs to leap from high places into the river—to dance the morice dance—to play on the violin. Was there a fire in the city, Quinten was the first present, the most active in extinguishing it. Was there a riot among the people, there was Quinten Metseys. My lady! you never saw him out of his shop, did you?”

“I never saw him but once,” answered Anna  
“and then—”

At this point the conversation was interrupted by the appearance of a servant, who came to announce that a female stood at the door, who requested a private interview with the Baroness.

“Light her up. I will see her,” was the reply.

“A young man is with her, dressed in the *blouse* of a mechanic—they seem ashamed to enter,” answered the servant.

“Show them both up, immediately,” commanded Anna. “Who can these persons be, Mary? Place that flower vase on the mantle. Stick those roses more in front—see, the *camelia japonica* has fallen



down. Intermix a few lilies with that bunch of heart's ease. Few things require more taste than dressing a flower-pot, Mary. Here they come—I hear his wooden shoes stamping up the staircase.”

The next moment the door was opened, and in came Quinten Metseys and his sister Rosa.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### QUINTEN AND THE BARONESS.

IF, during the time of the old heathen divinities, we suppose one of the Cyclopean hammer-men of Vulcan, to have been suddenly transported from his smoky forge under Mount Etna, and ushered into the courts of Olympus, his wonder and admiration at seeing for the first time the splendors of the celestial mansions, could scarcely have been greater than that experienced by Quinten Metseys, when he found himself in the apartment occupied by the lady of his love. It was the first time he had ever entered any but the lowly dwellings belonging to the simple mechanics and burghers in his own rank in society; and when the door was opened, and he caught a glimpse of the saloon, brilliantly illuminated with wax tapers, silver lamps, and glittering chandeliers, his heart trembled within him, and he felt as though



he had obtruded himself into a loftier sphere than his own; into a region blessed with a purer atmosphere, and inhabited by a superior order of beings. And when he saw, standing before him, the object of his enthusiastic adoration, gleaming with jewels and rustling in silks, and afterward thought on his own sooty and coarse garments—his wooden shoes—his charred leathern hose—his rusty, thread-bare blouse—he wondered at his own audacity in appearing there in such a garb, and more than once felt disposed to extricate himself from the dilemma by a hasty flight. Such had been his haste and excitement, that he had forgotten, ere he left home, to wash his hands and face, which were horribly blackened with smoke and charcoal. So there he stood, with his head hanging down, fumbling with his cap, until he had twisted it into every possible shape, the very picture of bashfulness; while Rosa hung on his arm, even more frightened than himself, and ready every moment to sink to the floor from excess of embarrassment. Was it not strange, that so bold a youth, and one, too, who possessed all the requisites of a valiant soldier, who had manfully encountered the brute strength of Hagendorf—should now tremble in every limb before a weak-armed lady? No, reader, it is not strange; it takes place every day in the world.

The lady, as has been before stated, had never seen Quinten Metseys but once, but his face and figure were too strongly marked, and too preëminently beautiful, to be easily forgotten. That she should, therefore, instantly recognize a youth, who had once been instrumental in saving her life, is not at all wonderful;



and still less so, that she should have been for some time struck dumb with astonishment at seeing him before her in his present situation. Far different, however, were the feelings of Mary Meyerly. The whole scene struck *her* in a ludicrous point of view; for Mary was one of those characters who combine many good traits, with an inseparable *penchant* for ridicule. She laughed at every thing—even at her own mistress.

“As I live,” said she, in a low voice, to the lady, “it’s Quinten Metseys himself. He looks as if he had just come from his shop. His sister, Rosa, with him, too; what under heaven can *she* want in such a place as this? See how they blush and hang down their heads. No wonder, poor things—for I’ll be sworn they were never in such a room as this before. St. Godule! but this is likely to be a queer adventure.”

“Silence, Mary,” said her mistress, partially recovering from her first surprise, and rebuking her maid with considerable asperity of manner; “how often have I told you not to speak so disrespectfully of the poor; and pray, how long is it since you yourself were better off than these indigent but honest persons?”

So saying, she left Mary in the upper part of the chamber, while she walked forward with an air of great affability and condescension toward Quinten and his sister. The former, encouraged by her manner, recovered more composure, advanced, knelt on one knee before her, and offered her the ring.

“Lady, behold the ring; do you recollect it?”



“Perfectly, good Quinten; pray, what boon would you ask of me?”

“I am now in need of protection,” answered the apprentice. “The officers of justice are even now in pursuit of me. Not many minutes have elapsed since they passed me on the street. I hid behind a dark corner, but could distinctly hear them pronounce my name, and threaten vengeance. The only favor I ask of you, is to allow me to conceal myself under the livery of a servant in your father’s household, until I can find the means of escape.”

“Young man,” answered Anna, recoiling a few steps backward, “what have you done? I see blood on your clothes. Come not near me. If you have committed murder—”

“I am no murderer, lady. I had a quarrel with Hagendorf, in whose shop I worked as an apprentice. He insulted me, calling me his slave, and struck me. I knocked him down, and left the shop with a fixed determination never to enter it again.”

“And how do you know, Quinten, that you have not killed him?”

“I just now heard him on the street, talking with the officers,” answered the youth.

She then bade him arise, thanked him in the warmest terms for the invaluable service he had once rendered her, and promised to do all in her power to protect him.

“But tell me,” she continued, “are you the author of this letter? Did you paint this picture?”

Anna Van Vriedt, in addition to her surpassing beauty, possessed a voice of such uncommon sweetness,



that the very sound of it, had been sufficient to have moved the heart of a blind man to love. Then as her silvery sentences fell one after another on the ear of the youthful apprentice, so completely was he absorbed and enchanted that he forgot his bashfulness—forgot his homely garb—forgot that any one was watching his motions, or listening to his words; and no sooner had she concluded, than, yielding to the natural impetuosity of his character, he poured forth his excited feelings with a fluency of utterance, and an elevation of language, to which he had hitherto been a perfect stranger. It was a moment of true inspiration. And, even as he spoke, and kindled more and more with his subject, his noble and manly form seemed to dilate—his cheek glowed—his eye flashed—every gesture became free, unembarrassed, imposing; and through all the soot of the smithy, and beneath all the squalor of poverty, beamed forth the glowing spirit of genius, and the undying flame of love. Even the sarcastic Mary Meyerly, habitual scoffer as she was, looked on in mute astonishment, and listened with breathless attention.

The lady herself was deeply affected, though she did her best to hide her emotion; and in walking up and down the apartment, was observed more than once to apply her handkerchief to her eyes. Young as she was, she had already been honored with many declarations of passion; but never had she heard one delivered with such overpowering fervor and eloquence. At length, with an assumed air of calmness, she stood once more before the apprentice, and answered him thus:



“Young man, I wish you well from the bottom of my heart, and will do all I can to assist you. You shall be concealed until to-morrow, and then furnished with the means of effecting your escape. Here is a purse—take it—it will supply all your wants. When it is exhausted, my father will send you more. But let me conjure you, by all that is holy—extinguish this unfortunate passion—if you do not, it may involve us both in ruin.”

“Once more, lady,” said Metseys, in a more calm and subdued tone than before; “allow me to speak. You ask me if I am the author of that picture? I am. The incident you see there so feebly depicted, has decided the fate of my life. Listen. I will tell you the history of my love. Soon after that event occurred, I was one day walking the streets of Antwerp. It was a day of *fête*. Charles, the Bold, was on a visit to our city. Perhaps you remember it. That day I saw you riding on horseback, surrounded by the noblest blood of the land. A Count, clad in purple, and glittering with gems, held your bridle rein. Marquises, Barons, gay cavaliers, with golden spurs and waving plumes, were prancing around you, all eager to be honored by a single glance of your eye—all supremely happy to catch one syllable from your rosy lips. Rich chains of gold hung round your neck; an ostrich feather waved over your brow; your palfrey was caparisoned in cloth of gold. Where, at that time, was Quinten Metseys, think you? Dejected, heart-broken, clad in the garb of a mechanic, without hope, consumed by love, wishing for death, and reckless of every thing, I stood among



the humble footpads, who were gaping at the splendid pageant. Just then an idea suddenly struck me. I recollected of having heard your father was of plebeian origin. I had been told that he raised himself to distinction by his talents as a painter—had risen higher and higher, till he was called the Raphael of the Netherlands—was patronised by the rich and noble of the land; and finally became himself both a rich man and a nobleman. I went home, shut myself up in my chamber—took pencil and paper—sketched, drew, copied, designed—burnt. From that time forward, every leisure moment was devoted to my art. I found, also, that to become a great painter, it was necessary to possess some information. I read the poets and historians—I was animated by a new spirit. From drawing with a crayon, I proceeded to work in colors. From time to time, I sent you my pictures, of which, the one now before you, is the last, and, perhaps, not the worst.”

“But, have you had no teacher, Quinten?” asked Anna Van Vriedt, with an expression of deep interest.

“Yes, lady, the best teacher in the world. He was the first inventor of painting, and the great inspirer of all the fine arts.”

“What is his name, Quinten?”

“His name, lady? And can't you guess it? He was the same, that in olden time, taught an enamored youth, to mark with a coal, the outlines of a beloved face, the shadow of which he saw cast on the wall. That youth, I have read, was the first limner—and his teacher was, why need I mention it? Who invented the most beautiful of the orders of architecture?”



Another enamored youth placed before his mistress' door, a vase of flowers. The vase stood there some time, until an *acanthus* growing round it, encircled it with its leaves—and this gave the first idea of a Corinthian capital."

"Enough of this, good Quinten," answered the lady. "I see nature has intended you for a painter. Think no more of *me*, but of your *Art*. Woo *her*, marry *her*; she will make you happy, and render you renowned. You must exchange the anvil for the easel, the hammer for the pallet, hob-nails and pinchers for canvass and colors. You shall be supplied with money; you shall travel to Italy, study the works of the first masters; and I hope to see the day when you shall return to our fair city of Antwerp and make yourself immortal!"

Quinten would fain have made a reply, but she commanded him in a tone, between jest and earnest, to remain silent; adding, that he was now her prisoner, and that his future good treatment depended entirely on his perfect obedience.

The fact is, just at that very moment, an expedient for relieving Quinten from his difficulties, had flashed like lightning across lady Anna's mind; and, as like most persons of warm and noble nature, she usually acted from the impulse of the moment, she resolved to put the scheme into instant execution. It was this: The lady had a brother, who was nearly of the same size and figure as Quinten. That brother was then traveling in Italy; for he, too, was an artist, and bade fair some day or other to equal her father in excellence. She recollected, that a short time before



setting out on his travels, he had ordered a complete suit to be made after the newest fashion, and such as gay cavaliers were won't to wear in that picturesque age; that the said suit had been finished, and was now hanging up in her brother's chamber, just as new as when it first came from the tailor's shop. Now, what was to prevent Quinten from dressing himself in those clothes, and being thus introduced to her father? But, here a difficulty arose. What character could he assume, so as to get into the old gentleman's good graces? The lady Anna was fertile in expedients. It so happened that a certain cousin of her's, the son of her father's brother, had been for some time expected on a visit. That very day was the one appointed for his arrival—the Baron expected to see him that night. The Baron *did*, but Anna did *not*; for she had, that very afternoon, received a letter from Paris, stating that unfavorable circumstances had prevented it. Her father, as yet, knew nothing of this letter. The plan was complete. Quinten Metseys must pass himself off as her cousin.

“But does not the Baron, your father, know his nephew by sight?” asked Mary Meyerly, with whom her mistress had held a whispered consultation in one corner of the room.

“No, Mary,” answered the lady; “he has not seen him since he was a small child. He then used to be called my sweetheart; and, if I am not very much mistaken, his intended visit has some connection with some foolish project of marriage or other.”

“I think I have heard he has an immense fortune,” said Mary.



“He is, I believe, what may be called rich, Mary. But there is no time to lose. I expect my father home every instant. Go, tell the servant to furnish my brother’s sleeping room with every thing necessary for a gentleman’s toilet. In the mean time, I will instruct the youth in the answers he is to return to my father’s questions.”

Mary Meyerly, who dearly loved any thing like fun, or that was any way connected with a trick or innocent deceit, danced off to execute the lady’s orders. The clothes were found—the chamber was well supplied with soap and water, basins and towels—every thing concurred to render the execution of the scheme easy and successful. Quinten proceeded, without delay, to make his ablutions and alter his dress; the lady Anna was obliged to leave the saloon to attend to some family matters; and Rosa Metseys was left there all alone, to amuse herself as she best might. What did she do, think you?



## CHAPTER VII.

## A FAIRY INTERLUDE.

OLD Peter Sneyders was right, The Fairies *were* dancing that night on the banks of the Scheldt; and at the very time when the incidents mentioned in the last chapter were taking place, they were grouped together on the left shore of the river. It was a plot of dewy meadow-ground, fragrant with violets and covered with young clover. During one of the pauses in the dance, the following conversation occurred. It was conducted by four fays of very different character, who stood apart from the rest, and seemed to be Titania's maids of honor, for the Elfin Queen was in the midst of them. One was Terpsinoe, a light, laughter-loving, dance-loving fairy, who could not bear to hear one serious word; the second was Zoa, a sensitive, poetic elf, with flashing eyes, and delicate nervous system: the third, Zophora, who seemed to have no character at all, for she changed her mind, and had some new whim or other, at least forty times in every second; and the fourth was Silvinella.

"See, sisters, how beautifully the moon is rising above yon distant cathedral," said Silvinella.

"Beautiful, indeed," answered Zoa. "Even in fairy-land, I never saw any thing more enchanting."

"A thought strikes me, sisters," said Terpsinoe,



wheeling round on her toe, and pointing the other foot like an opera-dancer; "what say you. Let's reduce ourselves to the size of minute atoms, and dance together on the very point of the spire."

"Agreed," said Zophora, "only let our Queen speak the word, and in the hundredth part of a second, I will make myself small enough to creep through the eye of the smallest cambric needle that ever maiden pricked her finger with."

"No, fairies," answered Titania, "I command you not to metamorphose yourselves into any shape smaller than that of a girl in her teens. Gnomes and evil spirits are abroad to-night, and it behooves us to be on our guard. And, after all, what shape or form can you find through all creation, half so beautiful as that of a young damsel just budding into womanhood?"

"None, may it please your majesty, none," said Silvinella; "but listen, sisters, how sweetly bell answers bell, from different parts of the city; and how charmingly the sound floats over the river to us. Ho! a carillon, carillon!"

"They are celebrating some Roman Catholic festival, belike," said Zoa, on whom the music appeared to exercise a powerful effect. "I feel that sound thrill through my whole frame; it shakes me more than a clap of thunder could do; it throbs in my head, tingles in my ears, echoes through my breast, and vibrates along every plume in my pinion,"

"But most of all, sister Zoa, I think you feel it in the tip of your tongue, don't you?" said the gay Terpsinoe; "for my part, I must confess, it works



stronger in my toes than in any other part of my system. Come, a dance, a dance!"

"Fie, sisters," rejoined Silvinella, "that's no tune to which we fairies should gambol on the greensward. Why—I would as soon think of dancing on the sound board of an organ, when its pipes are in full blast, and the whole church is trembling in every aisle and altar, crypt and vaulted ceiling."

"Ha! that reminds me of a little feat I once performed when I was in Italy," said Terpsinoe, "One night—it must have been three hundred moons ago—while wandering on the banks of the Arno—"

"A truce with your long stories," cried the volatile Zophora, who held stories of all kind in perfect aversion; "we'll hear it another time."

"Now or never," answered Terpsinoe, who like many a storier in our own days, could never rest till she was eased of the burden. "One night, I say, I entered the saloon of a splendid villa, on the banks of the Arno. It was midsummer, mark you; and the Florentine, to whom it belonged, had left the city, and was at that very time enjoying his *villigiatura*, with his whole family. They must all have been very sleepy that night, for they had gone to bed without locking a single door, or even putting down the case of the piano, 'Now, heaven help me,' cried I, 'I'll have some sport to-night, as sure as I'm a fairy!' So I changed myself into a puppet, not taller than a lady's hand, (no, not so tall,) and not an inch thicker, though I've seen some hands so slender and transparent that you might place them before your eye, and see the Man in the Moon through them.



Then I began to dance up and down on the key-board of the piano, until the perspiration ran off me like dew-drops."

"Ha, ha! to the music of your own feet sister," said Zophora; "how I should have loved to see you."

"Yes, it was fine sport," answered Terpsinoe; "but hard, dreadful hard work, notwithstanding. Such another crossing of legs, and cutting of pigeon-wings, and stretching out of big toes, and leaping from base to treble, and from treble to base, now treading on the black keys, now on the white—oh, it *was* warm work, sister, indeed. My feet went swifter than the winglets of the humming birds we saw when we were in America. Still, I went through it merrily, for it was something new to me, and the keys served as so many little spring-boards."

"Ay, faith! merry work it must have been, in truth," said Silvinella; "but pray tell me, did not the music rouse up the family?"

"Yes, it went echoing through every hall and chamber of the immense house, and woke up every one of the sleepers."

"Were they not frightened?"

"No, they lay in their beds perfectly enchanted, and ere the music ceased, all fell to sleep again, and began to dream of fairyland. 'Twas a pleasant night to them all, I ween. But see, a cloud has passed over the moon. What a black shadow falls over the city!"

"Yes," answered Zoa, "black grows every spire and turret; black every sharp-roofed house-top, and



painted gable-end. Methinks, sister, we shall have a May shower. Let us lay under yon willows till it passes."

"The scene has, indeed, changed most suddenly," said Silvinella, "but mark how, through yonder opening in the cloud, the moon darts a pencil of rays on the river, and on yonder distant sail. 'Twould make a pretty picture, wouldn't it?"

"Charming."

"Do you remember where we were this time last year?" asked Zophora, whose memory was very treacherous.

"Yes, sister—in Egypt," answered Zoa. "At evening we heard the cry of the muezzin, and saw many a mosque and minaret by moonlight."

"Oh! I recollect now. I once ran barefooted to the top of the great pyramid. Oh, the lovely lotus of the Nile! the obelisks! the palm trees! To tell the truth, sister, I should like to be there *now*."

"So would I," answered the sensitive Zoa, "these Gothic Churches sicken me! They look like spectres—and then they seem to be always making the sign of the cross at me—and that, you know, is what no fay or sylph can bear. The crescent forever! It reminds me of our own beloved moon. Come, let's wander off to Paynim lands again. These church bells pain me through and through."

"Out upon thee for a heathenish ouphe," exclaimed Titania, who, though not over religious herself, could not bear to hear any thing said against any religion, either Christian or Mahometan. "No, fairies, you shall not move from the banks of the



Scheldt, this blessed night. In yonder city a love adventure is being transacted, in which I feel the deepest interest. You must know that a young blacksmith's apprentice has dared to fall in love with a wealthy Baron's daughter. Even now my messengers are hovering round him. I expect them here every moment to inform me of the result. Meanwhile let's while away the time with merry dances. The bells have ceased ringing; the shower has passed over; the dark cloud is rolling off to the westward; and river, town, and mead are again steeped in moonlight. To the dance, to the dance!"

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### RESOLVE OF THE BARONESS.

WHEN the fair Anna and the jeering Mary Meyerly left the saloon, and Rosa found herself there all alone and freed from the restraint of bashfulness, she took a leisurely and accurate survey of the splendid objects round her, and throwing herself luxuriously on one of the velvet cushions of the sofa, she lay for some time absorbed in one of the most delightful day dreams, that ever entered the head of the simple hearted maiden. Every thing was so new to her, the lights burned so brilliantly, the polished tables



gleamed so brightly, the mirrors glittered so dazzlingly, the pictured arras hung so gorgeously, the Turkey carpets looked so beautiful, the frescoed ceiling so imposing—that the poor girl's brain was almost turned, and she thought herself in one of those enchanted halls, that she had heard old Peter Sneyders sing of, in some of his drunken ballads. Anon, she fancied herself the mistress and possessor of all she saw around her; arose from the sofa; tried to assume the dignified airs of a Baron's daughter; threw back her head; waved her hand; lifted her short petticoat as though it were a train, and in this guise paraded up and down the apartment. Alas, poor Rosa! little wert thou aware how, at that very time, the mischievous imp, Mary Meyerly, was peeping at thee through the key hole, and nearly bursting her sides with suppressed laughter.

It was well for Mary that her mistress did not see her at that time, for she would have drawn down upon herself the most severe reprimand. But the lady Anna, though in the same chamber, (it was the one adjoining the saloon in which Rosa was figuring,) heard or saw nothing of what was going on. She sat with her hand over her eyes, apparently engaged in deep meditation. At length she rose, and walked several times up and down the room in silence; and then calling Mary to her side, she informed her that she had made up her mind to sacrifice every thing to her love for Quinten Metseys. Mary, in spite of all her faults, loved her mistress more than any one else in the world, and it was, perhaps, this well known fidelity and affection, which induced the lady to make



a confidant of one so different from herself in disposition and manner of thinking. Mary was perfectly thunderstruck. It was long ere she could believe her mistress in earnest, and when at last she found that it was all but too true, she could not conceal her feelings, but burst out into a bitter and sarcastic laugh :

“A good joke, by the mass !” turning up her nose and tossing back her head. “The Baron’s daughter, Anna Van Vriedt, the pride of Antwerp, the beauty of the Netherlands, to marry a fellow that has spent all his days in hammering out hot iron on his master’s anvil ! A capital joke, i’faith ! To take a fellow for your husband that has never worn any thing better than a felt cap, and a leathern gaberdine—an unkempt bellows-blower, forsooth—a sooty son of Vulcan—an impudent madcap apprentice, who, because he chanced to render you a service, in a moment of peril, has the boldness to talk to you of love, and the shamelessness to offer you his hand.”

“Cease chattering, magpie,” answered lady Anna. “He spoke not a word of marriage. He expressed nothing but the most devoted adoration ; prayed only to become the humblest of my servants ; seemed to desire no greater happiness, than daily to see, hear, and obey me, whom, he said, he looked up to, as an anchorite looks up to heaven.”

“Pretty words, my lady, very pretty words ! which he has, no doubt, picked up from some strolling player, or conned by rote from a confectioner’s kiss papers ! Ha, ha ! The Baron’s daughter, Anna Van Vriedt, marry Quinten Metseys ! Why, lady, I’ll be sworn his hand is as hard as a piece of horn—his



arms as tough as a bar of iron. Permit such a fellow as that to squeeze your hand! Odd's fish! you'd better thrust your fingers into a vice or thumbscrew at once. A capital joke, upon my word! And you, too, who have had noblemen for—"

"Noblemen!" exclaimed the lady, "I despise your gilded butterflies of the court—your pompous pedigrees and emblazoned escutcheons. Give me one of nature's noblemen. Give me love, genius, enthusiasm—give me Quinten Metseys, for he has all these, and more."

"Excuse my boldness, lady," answered Mary; "but I can find no words to express my utter astonishment at your singular choice. And have you so soon forgot the young Duke of Lorraine, whom you danced with only a month ago at a court ball at Ghent, and who paid you such marked attention as to excite the envy of all the noble ladies in the apartment? There was a man for you, lady—teeth like ivory, a hand as soft and as white as your own, and a foot—"

"A foot, Mary, small enough to belong to a woman, but large enough to trample on the necks of thousands of poor vassals!"

"And then," continued Mary, without paying any attention to this last reply, "have you forgot the rich Count of Liegendorf, who made you a present of a necklace, rich enough to adorn the neck of a sultana? And the young cavalier, Vander Horst, son of the wealthiest merchant in Antwerp, and the handsome Baron de Louvain, and the gallant Marquis de Chaupiers, and the brave Viscount di Bragi, and the accomplished—"



“Enough, Mary. Your tongue runs like a mill-clapper. No more of this I command you. My mind is made up.”

“But reflect a moment, my lady. Your father—what will he say of this ignoble alliance? He is ambitious—a Baron—devoted to his daughter, and would think it an indelible disgrace to see—”

“Ha, Mary! you little know my father. True, he is ambitious, but he is also a man of sense. He has often cautioned me against lending too easy an ear to the flatteries of the rich and great. Besides, he is an enthusiastic lover of the art by which he has risen to distinction. My determination is fixed, Mary, unalterably fixed. Say not another word to me on the subject. Either Quinten Metseys, or a life of single blessedness. Here, Mary, adjust this curl—arrange my hair better. I am a perfect fright. By this time he must have descended to the saloon.”

Mary obeyed her mistress' orders in silence; but the frown on her brow, and the pout on her lip, showed plainly how disagreeable the lady's last words had been to her. She did not fail, also, to observe the flushed cheek and heaving bosom, the abstracted eye and the trembling hand, of one who, on ordinary occasions, was remarkable for her calmness and composure.

But it is now time to conduct the reader once more into the saloon, where Quinten Metseys had already made his appearance, much to the delight of his artless but affectionate sister.

Indeed, the poor girl, when she first caught a glimpse of her brother, attired in his new dress,



became so confused and dazzled, that she was in considerable danger of losing her senses. It was long ere she would believe the evidence of her own eyes; and when at last she was convinced that it was her very, *very* dear Quinten—the same dear object with whom she had so often sported in childhood, and whom she loved more than any one in the wide world, not even her lover excepted—she blushed, hung down her head, and seemed for a long time afraid to address a single word to him. But when Quinten came forward with all the ease and grace of a polished gentleman, (for these qualities seemed natural to him,) and affectionately kissed her forehead, her heart became suddenly too full for utterance, she fell hysterically on his neck, sobbed, laughed, and pressed him convulsively to her bosom.

“I thought you would be too proud to speak to poor Rosa any more, but I find you are the same dear brother to me as ever.”

And when the first burst of girlish feeling was expended, she began to examine his superb suit, first in general, then in detail; commenting on and handling every article separately, and, at the same time, uttering many an artless ejaculation of wonder and admiration.

“Stoop, brother, stoop, and let me look at your plume. Oh, what a beautiful chain of gold hangs round your bonnet! It is too, *too* fine. And your mantle, too, all of black velvet, and the rich doublet of silk under it. Lord! Lord! and your rapier—who ever saw the like—the handle made of solid gold, as I’m alive. Draw, Quinten, draw it from the



scabbard. Oh! how bright! Let me feel it," (and here she took the weapon in her hand and began to brandish it in the air.) "I wish to heaven I was a cavalier, and could flourish such a rapier as this. Oh, but wouldn't I go to the wars? wouldn't I follow Charles, the Bold, into Switzerland? wouldn't I wave it about, and thrust, and parry, and stab the enemy. Come, Quinten—let's see you march. What a beautiful officer you'd make—march, Quinten, march! Golden spurs to your boots, too! Dear me, did ever! How they jingle, how they shine! Thank heaven! I've lived to see my own Quinten dressed up like a brave young cavalier. And indeed, in double deed, ain't you ashamed to speak to your poor sister? Tell me, Quinten, tell me true. Why did you not let me know how you could paint? It was wrong in you, brother, unkind—very. There was mother and me racking our brains morning, noon and night, to know what you could be about so much in your little room—and you always kept the key yourself, and would not let any one so much as peep into it. But I might have known you were busy painting; for now I recollect, brother, how, when we were little children, playing about on the streets, you used to draw men, and dogs, and horses, on barn-doors and barrels, with chalk and charcoal. Don't you remember that, Quinten? And then the beautiful figures you used to scratch on Easter eggs—such birds, and ships, and carriages. And what's more, I recollect now, how you once drew a likeness of old Peter Sneyders, the one-eyed fiddler, with his wooden leg, and sugar-loafed hat. Everybody knew it was Peter, the



moment they clapt their peepers on it; and mother said then that you were born to be a painter, and old Hans Copenhole, the hosier, swore—”

How much longer she would have gone on in this strain, it is impossible to tell, had not her garrulity been suddenly interrupted by the entrance of lady Anna and Mary Meyerly. These were nearly as much struck by the dazzling apparition, as had been the simple-hearted Rosa. And if the lady had been able to detect and admire the noble beauty and symmetry of her lover's form and face, even when disfigured by rags and soot, what must she have thought of him, when she saw him blazing forth in all the glory of one of the richest and most gorgeous apparels ever made in Antwerp? No sooner did Quinten catch a sight of the object of his adoration, than he rushed forward and was at her feet in an instant.

“Arise, young man,” said the lady, endeavoring to assume as much composure as possible, and even affecting more of the cold and dignified air of nobility than was usual with her, for she strove carefully to conceal from her lover her real feelings toward him. “Arise—I command you.”

Quinten rose and gazed upon her with a look of intense and unutterable passion; but he said nothing, for his heart was too full for words.

“Come now, Quinten, and tell me how you like the plan proposed to you. Would you not love to travel to Italy—to visit Rome, and Florence, and Urbino, and study the works of Perugino, and Signorelli, and Leonardo de Vinci? Would you not love to see the Pope, and the Cardinals, and visit the



Vatican, and ramble up the aisles of St. Peter? Answer me, good Quinten, and be not afraid to express yourself with perfect freedom. Would you not love all these?"

"Above all things, my lady—but—"

"But what? Speak your meaning boldly."

"When, after all this, I return to Antwerp, and—"

Here Quinten made another pause and hesitated, as if afraid to proceed with the sentence.

"What, Quinten—what after your return?"

"My lady," he answered, "I fear what I intended to say might offend you. I am the son of a mechanic—my mother makes her living by spinning—my sister Rosa takes charge of the house. You are a Baron's daughter. I am afraid to speak it, lady. Excuse me,"

"I command you. What after your return? Would you not come back a finished painter—improved and polished by travel—your taste formed—your art mastered—and you yourself ready to commence a glorious career of fame and fortune?"

"This might all be," answered Quinten, "but where should I see *you*? Perhaps in the arms of another. That would be dreadful to me—I could never survive it."

"Fie, fie! young man," rejoined Anna Van Vriedt. "Have you, then, so little thirst for glory, so little enthusiasm for your art? I *had* thought nature intended you for a great painter, but I find—"

"Excuse me for interrupting you, lady; and take it not ill when I tell you I love my art well, I love



you better. . Nothing would please me more than to become a great painter; but, if in doing so, I must cease to be a lover, take away for ever, colors, canvass, easel, and pencil; yield me up to all the rigor of the law, and allow me to languish out my youth in the darkness of a prison."

"Ah, Quinten, I fear you have not the true spirit of an artist. I am sorry I have been so mistaken in you. It was not thus, that my father obtained eminence. I have often heard him say, that a poet, painter, or sculptor, must hold his art dearer than any thing else on earth, must live in it, must sacrifice all to it."

"I grant you, lady, all except his love and his honor. I will tell you: From the time when I first began to exercise myself in painting, I found myself a new being. It was a species of regeneration. All nature grew brighter, lovelier, embellished with a thousand charms, which I had before passed by unheeded. Did I behold a bright sunrise, or a gorgeous sunset, I clapped my hands and cried: 'Oh, that I might dip my pencil in heaven! Oh, that I could dash those glorious colors on the canvass!' Not a cloud passed over my head unobserved. The seasons, in their changes, brought new images, and in bringing new images, brought new delight. Every thing became a picture. The very streets presented groups of figures, picturesquely habited, and artistically arranged. The vessels in the harbor; the fishing-boats on the river; the fields around our city, with their meadows, herds, wind-mills, and weeping-willows; the maids, with their pitchers; and water



jars, gossiping around the public fountains—all filled me with enchantment. And when, on the Sabbath, I stood in our vast cathedral of Antwerp, and felt my soul buoyed up to heaven on the billows of divine melody; when the painted windows threw their bright tints across the pavement, and the priests swung their golden censers to and fro, before the altar—then, oh, then! the image of a bright-eyed Madonna, surrounded by groups of winged seraphs and cherubs, arose all fresh and vivid before me—and, strange to tell, lady, it ever assumed the form and expression of thine own face and features—of those lustrous eyes, those roseate cheeks, that smiling mouth, those glossy, waving ringlets.”

Lady Anna (as well she might) blushed deeply at the termination of this speech; but the lover approached nearer, seized her unresisting hand, and was raising it in a transport of passion to his lips—when the door slowly opened, and in came the Baron Van Vriedt.



## CHAPTER IX.

## THE NOBLE PAINTER.

THE Baron Van Vriedt was a stout, portly old gentleman, with a double chin, florid complexion, and fine blue eyes, beaming with all the fire of genius. His dress was rich and graceful; being composed of a short, black mantle of velvet, with hose formed of the same material, slashed and embroidered with green satin. In accordance with the fashion of the time, his breast was ornamented with more than one golden chain of costly workmanship; while his neck was surrounded by a ruff nearly as large, and quite as fine, as that worn by his daughter. In short, he was attired in that picturesque costume, which, we are told, received its origin about that time in the Netherlands, and which, with some modification, was still preserved in the time of Van Dyke, and served to ornament the portraits executed by that celebrated artist.

The Baron Van Vriedt had the good fortune to have been born at a period when the art of painting was in her first bloom and blossom. The two brothers, Hubert and Jean Eyke, had already contributed much to its improvement by the invention of oil-colors, and by their superior knowledge in perspective. The day had passed by for ever, when the



painter was considered on a par with the goldsmith. There was now something more looked for from him than painting houses or coloring tavern-signs. To execute altar pieces, to decorate the vaulted ceiling of churches with striking frescos, to depict the lives and adventures of saints and holy martyrs, to hand down to posterity striking and vivid portraiture of the greatest and best men and women of the age—such was, now, the painter's lofty and dignified office. He went hand in hand with the poet and historian. He was every where admired—respected—looked up to by the humble, and patronised by the great.

Such being the state of the art, it is not at all wonderful that a man of the Baron's genius, should obtain celebrity and opulence; particularly when we reflect that he had been patronized in early youth by Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy, at whose court he resided for many years, and for whom he executed many historical pictures and family portraits, which procured him not only warm thanks, but most munificent rewards. Like most persons who have grown rich and celebrated by the exercise of any of the fine arts, Van Vriedt was extremely vain; but then there was so much good-nature and benevolence mixed with his vanity—such an entire absence of envy, and such a warm appreciation of the merits of others—that this slight fault (the most amiable and amusing one a man can have) constituted but an insignificant blot on a character which was, in all other respects, so universally respected and beloved.

“Zounds! what have we here?” said the old man, as he entered the room and caught a glimpse of the



scene described in the last chapter. "My daughter hanging down her head and blushing up to her eyes—a young man kissing her hand—and—oh, ay—I forgot—it must be my nephew, from Paris. Egad, but he's quick on the trigger! But, it runs in the blood, I suppose. I never knew a Van Vriedt in my life that wasn't lively. His father, when he was a young man, was in the same way—and I, myself—but what signifies ripping up old stories? I'll speak to him, at all events. Halloo, young fellow! don't you know your uncle? You're my nephew, Frederick Van Vriedt, from Paris, I presume?"

Such was the openness in Quinten's nature, that, though he had been instructed beforehand in the part he was to act, he was perfectly dumb-founded by this question.

"What shall I say?" he asked, in a low voice, of the lady. "I don't like this deception. Had I not better go forward boldly, and confess all?"

"By no means," answered the lady, in a rapid whisper. "That will spoil all. Manage it as I told you to do, I command you."

"Well, if I must, I must," responded Quinten, who now prepared himself to act his part as well as he was able.

"What! no answer yet?" said the old gentleman, advancing a few steps. "The fellow must be head and ears in love, or else he's as deaf as a post." Then, elevating his voice, and addressing himself still to Quinten, he cried:

"Halloo, there! Here's your uncle, that you havn't seen these ten years. Come, come—cease your



scene described in the last chapter. "My daughter hanging down her head and blushing up to her eyes—a young man kissing her hand—and—oh, ay—I forgot—it must be my nephew, from Paris. Egad, but he's quick on the trigger! But, it runs in the blood, I suppose. I never knew a Van Vriedt in my life that wasn't lively. His father, when he was a young man, was in the same way—and I, myself—but what signifies ripping up old stories? I'll speak to him, at all events. Halloo, young fellow! don't you know your uncle? You're my nephew, Frederick Van Vriedt, from Paris, I presume?"

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whisperings, and your blushings, and your kissing of hands, a moment, and look at your uncle. Unworthy of your notice, eh, boy? Then I had better make off with myself."

And the old gentleman, who was something of a humorist, turned his back, and walked, with rapid, strides toward the door.

"Oh, my dear uncle," said Quinten, running after and embracing him, "excuse, I beseech you, this absence of mind—but, really, it has been so long since I have seen this fair cousin of mine—that—that"

"You had not a word to say to her old father, hey? To be sure, we old folks are always in the way, in such matters; but still—"

"Pardon me, my dearest uncle," said Quinten, seizing the Baron's hand, and squeezing it with such fervor, as almost to bring tears from the old man's eyes. "I hope—"

"Zounds!" exclaimed the Baron, wincing and twisting his face into every possible shape; "but the young buck has a powerful gripe. I swear, by the soul of Van Eyk, sir, your hand is as tough as a piece of wrought iron. Well, well! Never blush. I like you all the better for it. It shows that you're not effeminate—not above doing little odd jobs for yourself, now and then. But how's your father, Fred? Still as successful as ever in business, hey?"

"I believe, uncle, he is generally considered one of the most flourishing men in Paris," was the reply.

"And how does he look?" continued the Baron. "Does he show the marks of Time yet, or does he



still weather it out stoutly? Can he show such a thigh as that, Fred? Or such a calf? Though *I* say it, that shouldn't, few old men have been less hacked and hewed by the old Scythe-Bearer, than myself. Isn't it so, Fred—isn't it so?"

"It seems so, indeed, uncle."

"And how's your mother, Fred? Is she fat or lean—pale or rosy?"

"I'll be cursed if I know, more than the man in the moon," whispered Quinten to the lady, who was in fear and trembling every moment, lest he should say something to expose himself.

"Fat!" said she, in a tone so low as to be almost inaudible to her lover.

"What! absent again, Fred? Again whispering to your cousin. Can't I get a word out of you?"

"Pardon me, sir," answered Quinten, "I was always absent, from a child. My father has often scolded me for it. You asked something about my mother, did you, uncle?"

"Is she fat—in good case—or, as you say in Paris, '*en bon point*?'"

"As fat as butter, uncle. I never saw her looking better in my life. Rosy as the morn."

"Ha! poetical, too, Fred. Did you ever paint, my boy? Did you ever handle a pencil?"

"I must confess I *have* done some little in that line, uncle. It has helped me to while away many an idle hour. But, as yet, I am only what the Italians call, a '*dilettante*.' I hope, however, that a short residence under your hospitable roof, will enable me to acquire more skill and a firmer hand."



“Hope so, too, with all my heart,” returned the Baron. “But, by the way, speaking of paintings, reminds me of a little incident of a singular nature, which came to my knowledge not two hours ago. I will relate it to you. Some six years ago I painted a picture, which has been universally considered as my most perfect production. I presented it to the Church of Notre Dame, in this city, where it still hangs, and is gazed at every day by hundreds. The subject was: ‘The Fall of the Angels’; and to prepare myself better for the task, before touching brush to canvass, I read, with deep attention, the ‘Divina Commedia,’ of Dante, for the purpose of transfusing, if possible, some of the spirit of the poem into the figures of the picture. Frederick, my boy, you shall go with me to-morrow and look at it. I’m proud of it, Fred, it’s a perfect masterpiece!”

Here the old man paused a moment to take a pinch of snuff, while Quinten Metseys exhibited such unequivocal signs of embarrassment and confusion, that, had the Baron not been so intent on his story, he must certainly have observed him.

“Well—to proceed with my anecdote—I went there to-day, to show the picture to an old friend of mine, who is now on a visit to Antwerp, and, judge of my surprise, Fred, when I discovered that some unknown artist had had the boldness and impudence to re-touch, and make alterations to one of the most striking figures in the whole piece.”

“It is all over with me now, lady,” whispered Quinten, in a hurried tone to Anna Van Vriedt. That *unknown artist* was myself.”



“Bad enough,” answered the lady, placing her little mouth so close to his ear that he could feel her breath on his cheek. “Bad enough. But cheer up. Don’t turn so pale. We’ll get round it yet. Never fear.”

“What! whispering to your cousin again, eh? Absent again? Zounds! then you’ve not heard a word of the story, I suppose?”

“All, uncle—I have heard it all. I was only expressing my surprise to my fair cousin, here. The most striking figure in the whole piece, you say? That’s horrible, uncle, perfectly horrible!”

“Yes,” resumed the Baron, “decidedly the most striking figure in the piece. It was a representation of Satan tumbling down, head-foremost, toward hell—his hands on his thunder-scathed brow—his legs convulsively wreathing in the air. That figure was the admiration of every one, Fred. You shall go and see it to-morrow. I fear I shall never produce such another work. Never, as long as I live Fred!”

“And pray tell me,” asked Quinten, with as much composure as he could muster, “what will you do to this unknown artist, should you be so fortunate as to discover his name? How will you punish him?”

“How *ought* he to be punished?” answered the Baron. “Would imprisonment be too good for the rascal, think you? Would exile, or the galleys, or cutting off his right hand, be too good for him?”

Quinten, in spite of all his courage and presence of mind, was here so intensely agitated, that he trembled in every limb. It was not so much the prospect of a jail which frightened him, as having



all his hopes of obtaining the hand of the fair Anna cut off for ever.

He expressed his fears in a low voice to the lady, and she was proceeding to make a reply, when the Baron exclaimed, in a tone of more anger than he had hitherto assumed :

“What ! whispering again ? I find you take no more interest in your uncle’s reputation as a painter, than if he were an ordinary man. Answer me, you scamp. What ought to be done with the rascal, think ye ?”

“Why, really, uncle,” answered Quinten, “till I see the picture myself, and find out the real amount of injury it has received, it would be impossible to guess what damage you might be entitled to. But—”

“But what ?” rejoined the Baron, putting on a humorous smile. “I see you know nothing about it. It’s a way of mine—all in the way of a joke, Fred. You must know that the picture, instead of being injured, has been greatly improved. It was fine at *first* ; *now* it is preëminent. ’Twas the making of it, sir—the making of it. I wonder the idea never occurred to myself. I would not have it without the alteration for the world. Egad, daughter, if I could discover who did it, it would go hard with me, but I would offer him your hand in marriage.”

“I hope, dear father,” answered the lady, trembling in every limb from excess of pleasure, at the turn which the conversation so unexpectedly had taken, “that I shall always be allowed to have *my little say* in that matter. But I wager you my life on it, I can aid you in discovering the author of the



alterations you speak of. Here, Mary, bring out that picture which was sent to me to-day—I wish my father to see it.”

Had the Baron, during the time Mary was gone after the picture, taken the trouble to observe Quinten's countenance, he could scarcely have failed to discover the violent, but delightful emotions, with which the young man's bosom was agitated. But the fact is, the old gentleman read nothing on the faces or either of the youthful lovers, for the very plain reason that he did not look at them. This was owing to one of those many little eccentricities which belonged to his character, and for which he was often rallied by his friends, and laughed at by strangers. He had the habit of breaking off in the most interesting point of the most interesting conversation, for the sole purpose of taking a peep at his rubicund visage and portly figure in the looking-glass; and so intent was he during the time on this operation, as to be totally regardless of all that was going on around him. On the present occasion, he was seen to walk rapidly up to the opposite part of the saloon, and to station himself before a large mirror, which was fixed in the wall, and which some people supposed he loved almost as much as he did his own daughter. Arrived there, he stretched his mouth from ear to ear, to see whether his teeth (and he certainly had very fine ones for a man of his age) were in their usual trim; then he carefully adjusted his immense ruff, smoothing down and patting it most affectionately; then he arranged his wig more cosily on his head; and at last, after taking a leisurely



survey of his whole person, from head to foot, his countenance brightened into a complacent smile—which was as much as to say: “Look at me, gentlemen and ladies—I’m in complete apple-pie order.”

But this was not all; for had the Baron stopped here, I would not have considered the incident worth recording, as it is a thing we see every day of our lives. His next, operation, however, was one which I believe peculiar to himself—at least I have never met with a man who could execute it with anything like the same degree of ease and gracefulness. This was, what he himself facetiously termed, *making the great dip*. It consisted in placing his heels close together, turning out his toes so as to form nearly a straight line with his feet, and then, after bending his knees almost down to the floor, to bounce up again, much after the fashion of a high-swung carriage rising on its springs. It was, certainly a beautiful feat, and while, at the same time, that it served to recreate and delight the spectator, appeared to give infinite relief and satisfaction to the performer. What was the origin of his charming habit (for like most things of that kind it must originally have sprung from some cause) I have never been able to learn with any certainty. Perhaps it first arose from the natural buoyancy and joyousness of the Baron’s disposition; perhaps from a desire to find out whether all the machinery in his legs were well greased and in good traveling order—perhaps—but it is useless speculating on a matter which appears involved in so much obscurity. I would only mention, while on this subject, that he sometimes performed another feat,



which bore about the same relation and resemblance to the first, that the Little Bear does to the Great Bear, and which, from the striking analogy in the two cases, he was accustomed to call the *little dip*. This he would often perform as he walked along, without altering much the degree of his velocity, or giving any previous notice of it to the spectators. It was sudden, unexpected, delightful—in fact, many persons preferred it to the more regular and formal exhibition, above alluded to.

When Mary brought back the picture, she hastily removed the envelope, and placed it in the middle of the apartment.

“Stop, hussy!” said the old gentleman, somewhat testily, “don’t set it there, Mary. Nor there, between those cross-lights, either. What’s got into the girl? Will you never know any thing? Here—here’s the place to show a picture to advantage. Now, draw down that blind a little lower—open the window-curtains, for the moon is very bright to-night—remove those candles to a greater distance.”

And when, at last, the old limner had placed it in the most favorable position possible, he stood for some time gazing on it in silence, and then said, to his daughter:

“Beautiful! Anna—yea, more than beautiful—there’s genius there—genius, uncultivated, it is true, but bold, vigorous, striking. The improvement, too, is truly wonderful, for you need not tell me who painted it. That can be seen at a glance. It is from the hand of the artist who has been sending you pictures for the last twelve months. Not that it is



without its faults, either, Anna. Here, Mary, bring me my oil-pots and brushes—quick—quick. A little more shading here, a trifle more expression there; a vein in *this* place, a swelling of the muscle in *that*; a little more rotundity to this arm, (a good arm was a hard thing to paint,) a somewhat mellowed tint to that drapery; here, a beam of light, there a strip of shadow. 'He has genius, though, Anna—mark my words for it, this young man will, one day, outstrip us all.'

And then the amiable Baron Van Vriedt, sat down before the picture and began to alter, re-touch, amend—and so completely was he absorbed in the task, that you might almost have fired a cannon-ball above his head, without in the least distracting his attention. Quinten Metseys and his beloved Anna, at the same time, commenced a low colloquy, which, though very delicious in reality, might, perhaps, appear rather tedious on paper; while Mary Meyerly and Rosa were fast beginning to renew their old acquaintance, and to talk over old times.

But lo, and behold! while matters seemed going on so smoothly and comfortably, an incident occurred which entirely altered the aspect of affairs. The servant made his appearance at the door, and announced the arrival of the real Frederick Van Vriedt—that very same cousin, whom the lady Anna had counted so confidently on *not* seeing. But the best laid schemes will sometimes fail. Since sending the letter, he had changed his mind—started off in a hurry from Paris, and was, at that very time, in the house of his uncle, the Baron.



## CHAPTER X.

## THE BARON'S NEPHEW.

FREDERICK VAN VRIEDT was a dashing young blood, dressed in the latest Parisian fashion of that period, with flowing, curly ringlets, gold-handled rapier, and flaunting plume. His face was always on a broad grin—his clothes were composed of the gaudiest materials—he was redolent with the essence of musk—overflowing with animal spirits—always bowing, figuring, capering—never still an instant—in short, one of the most accomplished dandies and “*bon vivants*” of the fifteenth century.

All who heard the terrible words of the servant, were completely thunderstruck—and they all *did* hear them, except the Baron himself. He was still absorbed in his occupation, and continued painting away; and talking to himself as though no one else was present.

“*Ma foi*, fellow,” said Frederick, addressing himself to the servant, as he entered the room, “here’s surely some mistake, Are you certain this is my uncle’s house?”

“As sure, sir, as that I’m standing here,” answered the servant.

“*Mort de ma vie!* but this is droll,” said Frederick to himself. “Be obliged to stand ten minutes at the



door before admittance, and when I enter, at last, to be received with no more attention than—*parblieu!* what a strange scene! The father painting—the daughter standing blushing behind a cavalier, who seems ashamed to hold up his head—the maid almost dying to restrain her laughter—a rosy grizette, in nine pairs of petticoats, scared out of her wits—*Mon Dieu, que c'est drole!* However,” he continued, after a short pause, “I’m determined to see the meaning of it.”

And so saying, he walked fantastically up, tripping lightly on his tip-toes, and giving the old gentleman a smart tap on the shoulder.

“Zounds!” cried the Baron, starting, and looking round, “who *are* you, sir, that dare to interrupt me just as I am putting the finishing strokes to a painting? Who *are* you, sir?”

“Frederick Van Vriedt, your loving nephew—at your service, sir.”

“My nephew? what do you mean, sir? There stands my nephew. Explain this impertinent intrusion, sir?”

“That young gentleman your nephew? *Sacre Dieu!* Read that, uncle. I hope that will remove your doubts.”

| It was a letter from Frederick’s father to the Baron; there could be no mistake about it.

“Egad! this is my brother’s hand-writing. I could swear to it, among a thousand. Give me your hand, boy. You’re most heartily welcome to Antwerp. And now, sir,” he continued, turning to Quinten, “explain the meaning of this foul trick—this infamous



deceit you have been playing on me. Zounds! now I bethink me, I thought the fellow's hands were rather too hard and horny, to belong to the son of the richest merchant of Paris. Explain all this, sir, or this instant leave my house."

"The Baron Van Vriedt will have the goodness to pardon—to pardon an indiscretion—a deception—which is the first I—"

"Come! none of your fine speeches, young man," answered the Baron, in great passion. "Come to the point at once, or dread the severest consequences from my vengeance."

"*Mort de ma vie*," cried Frederick, dancing about the room in a great bustle. "This is certainly a strange adventure, uncle. Leave the whole matter to me. I warrant you I'll bring him round in short order."

Here he stepped up—stationed himself full in front of Quinten, and slapping the handle of his rapier, exclaimed:

"There, Monsieur, do you see that? Please have the goodness to explain your conduct immediately, or else walk out with me for a few moments."

During this speech, Quinten Metseys changed his look and air suddenly from deep abasement, to proud defiance:

"Come on, sir," he cried, frowning fiercely, and seizing his sword-handle, "I will brook an insult from no man."

And the two young men were advancing rapidly toward the door, when Anna Van Vriedt rushed forward, seized Frederick by the hand, and exclaimed:



“For heaven’s sake, good cousin, be not so hasty. Pause a moment, I conjure you both. Quinten, come back to my father. As I was the author of this mystery, on me, naturally, devolves the task of explaining it.”

All three then walked slowly back, and stationed themselves before the Baron.

“This young man,” continued Anna Van Vriedt, addressing her father, “is an apprentice, who has been so unfortunate as to quarrel with his master, and has now taken shelter under our roof, in order to escape the punishment and disgrace of a prison. He is—”

“Zounds! daughter! and I suppose I’m to harbor all the miserable apprentice and vagabond loafers that—and these splendid clothes, too? Where did *they* come from? Stolen, I warrant you. Taken up with a swindler, eh? a vile thief—a—”

“Patience, dear father,” answered the lady, “pray do not condemn, until you hear the whole. This young man is Quinten Metseys, the blacksmith’s apprentice—the very same who once—”

“Who once saved your life, girl. That was a service not easily forgotten. I have always had the intention of rewarding him for it, as it deserved. But, I must confess, it grieves me to the heart, to find him likely to turn out utterly unworthy of my assistance or patronage.”

“Listen once more, dear father. I have this evening made a discovery. The author of yonder picture, and the *unknown artist* who made the alterations to your painting in the church of Notre Dame,



is one and the same person. He stands, now, before you."

"Shade of Apelles!" cried the Baron, lifting up his hands, in utter astonishment, "impossible. Quinten Metseys paint this picture? Come, come, girl, no more of your tricks on your old father, I beg of you."

"It is a fact, sir, by all that's sacred," answered the lady; and then, turning round to Metseys, she said, in a low voice:

"Now is your time, Quinten."

Quinten advanced a step or two nearer the Baron, placed his hand on his bosom, assumed all the ease and dignity of a perfect gentleman, and expressed himself in the following words:

"What your fair daughter has just told you, Baron Van Vriedt, is all as true as gospel. *I* painted that picture; *I* altered the figure of your Satan; *I* am the author of the poor paintings, which, at different times, have found their way into your house; *I* am Quinten Metseys, once a blacksmith's apprentice, now a fugitive from justice. All that I have to add to this confession, is, that I love your daughter with such a deep and unutterable affection, that I am willing, should circumstances preclude me from the hope of aspiring to her hand, to serve her the remainder of my days, in the capacity of her most humble and devoted servant."

"A brave speech," answered the Baron, relaxing into a smile, "and bravely delivered, too. Egad! you're a lad of spirit—give me your hand—you shall become my scholar. But stop a moment, the whole



mystery is not yet fully explained—excuse the particularity—but these fine clothes, sir, where did *they* come from?”

“This question, father, is easily answered,” said Anna Van Vriedt, who explained to her parent in a few words, the nature of the trick she had played on him, and promised faithfully never to practice any thing like deception again, as long as she lived. The old gentleman scolded a little at first, but his tender heart soon got the better of him, and taking her pretty little hands between his own, he gave her an affectionate kiss, and told her he hoped she would be a better girl in future.

Here the servant again made his appearance, and announced the fact that the officers had succeeded in tracing Quinten to his place of asylum, and that they were then waiting at the door, and impatient for admittance.

“Show them up, George,” said the Baron; “but damme if they shall hurt a hair of the boy’s head, though. Mary, my girl, suppose you go down to them and explain the whole matter. Tell them I shall go the boy’s security—that I assume the responsibility on my own shoulders—in short, tell them any thing you like, only get them out of the house as quickly as possible.”

And then, turning round to Quinten, he said:

“Never fear, my boy, I’ll make a first-rate painter of you yet. Come, what say you to traveling to Italy, and joining my son there? You shall not want for means to do so, while Baron Van Vriedt is alive.”



Quinten's heart was full almost to bursting. He fixed his eyes on the lady Anna, and said nothing.

"Ha! I understand you," resumed the old gentleman, with an arch smile. "You don't like to leave your lady-love so long, eh? Nothing more natural, Quinten. When I was of your age, I recollect, I was in the same way. Well! if you can't muster up resolution enough to leave her, you shall e'en marry her this blessed night, Quinten, and next week we'll all travel off to Italy in company. Does that plan suit you better, boy?"

As may well be supposed, Quinten's delight at this proposal, was unbounded; he shed tears of joy; kissed the old gentleman's hand; laughed, blushed, wept, and at last resumed his old employment of uttering soft and low sentences in the ear of the beautiful Anna.

"What, billing and cooing already, are you?" said the Baron. "*Still whispering in your cousin's ear, eh?*"

"Sir, the fiddler and guests are at the door," said the servant.

"Show them up, George," roared the Baron, who never remembered to have felt in a merrier mood in the whole course of his life. "You must know, my dear Fred," he continued, addressing his nephew, "this is my birth-night, and it has always been my custom, for many years past, to celebrate it, by inviting to my house, a merry company of honest burghers and artisans, with their wives and daughters. I do this, because I myself was a child of lowly birth and untitled parentage. I sincerely hope, Fred, that



you are not too proud to share in the dance, and participate in their simple revels."

"A dance! *ma foi!* we're to have a dance, are we?" shouted Fred, at the very top of his lungs, and looking all the time like a fiery race-horse about to begin his first heat. "Why, uncle, I'm counted the very best dancer in Paris. *Vive la bagatelle! vive la dance! vive la joi! voyes vous cela, Messieurs,*" and he began to skip about the room with the agility of a bacchante on Mount Citheron. Nor was the old gentleman a whit behind him in mirth and spirit; thrice did he make *the great dip*, with a grace and enthusiasm, a genuine gusto, which delighted and inspired every one present; and which attracted huzzas from Frederick, bravos from Quinten, roseate smiles from the lady Anna, from Mary Meyerly clapping of hands, and tears of laughter from Rosa Metseys. It was the Baron's masterpiece.



## CHAPTER XI.

## THE PARTY AT BARON VAN VRIEDT'S.

Sovra il sen la man mi posa,  
Pulpitar, balzar lo senti;  
Egli e il cor che i suvi contenti,  
Non a fortza a sustiner.

SOMNAMBULA, ACT I, SCENE III.

AND now the simple-hearted, but joyous guests, began to flock in—sometimes in pairs, sometimes in merry groups. Onward they came—stout, corpulent burghers, with trunk hose, and spacious doublets, and ponderous purses hanging to their girdles—coifed matrons and rosy-cheeked maidens, with broad, full-moon faces, and blooming apprentice boys, adorned with blossomed boughs and fragrant flowers of spring—such figures as may still be seen on the canvass of Terniers, and Van Ostade, and Gherard Dow. Onward they came, with merry jest, and clear resounding laugh, and sound of violin; and ever in the midst, hobbled along our old friend, Peter Sneyders, the prince of good fellows, the maudlin minstrel of Antwerp, the one-eyed leader of the jocund uproars.

Anon, the Baron bade his pages bring the wassail bowl, gleaming with the raciest Rhenish to the very brink, and which, as it passed rapidly from mouth to mouth, served as a purple mirror, to reflect back



many a cheek almost as rosy as itself. Around it went, bright, sparkling in the light of silver lamps and long wax-tapers; all drank, all smacked their lips, and all pronounced it good. The burghers and the blithe apprentice boys indulged in deep potations—but the maids, (God bless their souls,) like humming-birds hovering around the lily's dewy chalice, scarce touched it with their lips, then passed it on.

All this time our good old minstrel (who, be it known, was in the very center of a joyous circle they had formed around him) stood with violin under his arm, and fiddle-bow on his shoulder, slowly turning like a pair of compasses on his wooden leg, that he might obtain the better view. And ever and anon he leered at the revolving bowl, out of the corner of his single eye, which glistened all that night as bright as the evening star. Never before in his whole life had Peter experienced so burning a thirst; for though scarce a half an hour had elapsed since he had tasted of the flagon which ever hung to his girdle, still, thirst was sculptured on every feature of his face, and his mouth felt as dry and parched as though it were filled with alum, or half-ripe persimmons. But when, at last, the bowl had gone its round, and was presented to the hands of the impatient scald, he gazed for an instant into its golden cavity, and finding that its contents had been drained, his countenance assumed a rueful scowl—he flung it in a furious passion on the floor, and stamping fiercely with his wooden leg, exclaimed:

“For shame! my masters, ye havn’t left so much



as an old woman's thimbleful to wet the fiddler's throat with. Seek out some other minstrel, if you please ; for I can no more fiddle without liquor, than a grist mill can grind without water, or a wind-mill go without a blast."

The old man began to hobble toward the door, cursing and fuming with rage, much to the amusement of the lads and lasses who crowded round, and prevented him from advancing a single step.

"Hold, worthy Peter," said the Baron, wiping the tears from his eyes, for the incident struck him as irresistibly ludicrous, and he laughed until his portly stomach shook again. "Hold, master Peter. We have still more wine left of the very same quality—all nicely spiced and sweetened, by the hands of my own daughter, Anna. Go, page, and fill the bowl a second time."

The page soon executed the order ; and he had no sooner returned than the wrinkled face of old Peter Sneyders relapsed into a grim smile, and he took a draught, so long and deep, that many feared that he would never lower the bowl from his lips.

"Did you ever see this young cavalier before, Peter?" asked the Baron, pointing to Quinten Metseys.

"No, your honor ; I'll be sworn I never saw him before in my life ; but, this much I can say—a more gallant looking—"

"Come, come," said Quinten, shaking the honest fiddler by the hand ; "none of your compliments, minstrel. You know me well enough, good Peter ; and scarce has an hour elapsed since you sung me a



pretty song about a blacksmith. Don't recollect, I suppose, 'his anvil ringing, his hammer swinging.' "

"Bless my old soul," said Peter, rubbing his eyes, as if waking from a long dream; "can this, in very truth, be Quinten Metseys. *Donder und Blitzen!* I've heard of such things in ballads and fairy tales, but never before—oh, Lord! Lord! didn't I tell you the fairies would be tripping along the banks of the Scheldt, the whole blessed night?"

"The fairies have made a painter of him, Peter; for if *they* did not teach the boy, I don't know who did. He's to be my son-in-law, Peter."

"Your honor's son-in-law? Ouns! buns! that I should live to see such a wonderful thing as this."

And then the good-hearted old fiddler was so elated with joy, astonishment, and wine, that he performed the very same rapid gyration, which the reader has seen him exhibit once before, and which was always a sure sign that he was happy.

"But come, Peter," said the Baron, "can't you sing us that pretty May-song, the tune of which I think I heard you say you learned from a wandering Austrian minstrel, and which the maidens of Vienna have been wont to sing, time immemorial, at every new return of spring? To tell the truth, I loved the ditty well, and most willingly would I hear it at least once a year, as long as I live."

"May it please your honor," answered Peter, "I'll e'en extemporize some verses to the same tune. To me, the old words have become stale and flat, and old songs are like old women, very good and comfortable things in their way, but not at all exciting,



you know—not much sought after. You must excuse my voice, too, which is a little cracked by age, and mayhap with too free use of the tankard—and sounds a little hollow, like the echoes of an empty wine-cask—but, such as it is, here's for you:

*Sung to the tune of the "Vienna Mailied."*

Tra, ri, ro! Farewell to the Winter's snow!

Let's go and gather flowers,

And sit us in fragrant bowers;

Yo, yo, yo! Farewell to Winter's snow!

Tra, ri, ro! Again the cuckoos crow!

The meadows! the meadows! let's dance the meadows over,

And o'er old Winter's corpse.

Cast a winding sheet of clover;

Yo, yo, yo! Again sweet breezes blow.

Tra ri, ro! Again musk-roses grow!

The May-pole! the May-pole! we'll gather there to-morrow,

And bury wrinkled sorrow.

Yo, yo, yo! Farewell to Winter's snow.

Tra, ri, ro! The grazing heifers low!

With plume in his bonnet, and sword by his side,

The blacksmith has won him a sweet, pretty bride.

Come! drink, and drive care away,

And at the dawn of day,

We'll usher in the first of May!

Yo, yo, yo! Farewell to Winter's snow!

When the song was concluded, there was heard long and loud bursts of applause; for the guests were in that happy mood of mind, which inclines men more to admire than criticise. Frederick, in one of his capricious freaks of good humor, rushed up and seizing Quinten by the hand, conjured forgiveness for having insulted him. Quinten was quite as ready to pardon, as he had been before to fight, and yielding even more to the natural impetuosity of his



character, he gave the effeminate Parisian dandy such a rough and hearty squeeze, that the latter twisted his body into as many contortions as Laocoon, when writhing under the coils of the serpent.

“I mean no offence, my young friend,” said Fred, “but I would seriously advise you, for two or three weeks to come, to keep your hands constantly *in soak*.”

Quinten took the joke in good part, and was proceeding to answer, when the door again opened and in strode a stalwart man, with bluff and burly face, whose natural repulsiveness of aspect was increased by having his head bound around by a bloody bandage. Behind him waddled along a squatty, bandy-legged figure, which followed him wherever he went, like his own shadow. It was Hagendorf, accompanied by his faithful apprentice, Crumbein.

It seems that Mary Meyerly had, by dint of persuasions and promises, prevailed on the officers to give up the search after Quinten; but the blacksmith himself was not so easily quieted; so, finding it impossible to gain the assistance of the servants of the law, he determined to take the matter in his own hands, and if every other expedient should fail, to drag out the culprit by the hair.

Hagendorf was a man of desperate courage, but it was of a brutal, surly kind, and that night he seemed to have more than his usual share of *bull-dogishness* about him. As he stalked in, growling, grinning, and grinding his foaming tusks, and at the same time grasping in his right hand a huge, knotted club, he presented a spectacle at once startling and ludicrous.



The guests at first recoiled and fled, but fear soon giving way to the spirit of mirth, they grouped themselves around him, and saluted him with such an unmerciful volley of jests and jibes and jeers, that he was more than once tempted to rush among them with his cudgel, and make them laugh, as he said, "the other side of their mouths." And this he most undoubtedly would have done, had not the Baron interposed, and placed in his hands a well-filled purse, commanded him to take as much as would satisfy him for the injury received, and instantly to leave the house. Hagendorf coolly and silently counted out five glittering golden boys, carefully deposited them in his long leathern bag, returned the Baron his purse, scraped the floor awkwardly with his foot as an apology for a bow, and took his leave almost as surly as before.

Crumbein, as may well be supposed, soon followed his master's example; but ere he turned to go, he looked waggishly at Quinten, winked three or four times very hard with both his eyes, extended his chin, elevated his left leg, and cried out in a shrill, and squeaking voice:

"A snake! a snake!"

Having delivered this laconic remark, he wheeled around and made his exit without saying another word.

When he was gone, the guests wondered much what could be the hidden meaning of a speech so strange and enigmatical; some gave one explanation, some another; but no one was so fortunate as to unriddle it, until the old fiddler, after standing for



some minutes wrapt in deep study, struck his forehead with his palm, and observed that it was doubtless a mystical allusion to the strange custom prevalent among serpents, of molting, or putting on a new skin, with the return of spring.

Scarcely had the applause which succeeded this explanation died away, before the door again rolled on its hinges, and in tripped our pretty flower-girl, Clara Onderdonk. Beside her came a fresh-looking young peasant, with pleasant, smiling face, brimfull of health and jollity. It was her lover, farmer Borsh. The girl herself held the very same two baskets she had when first introduced to the reader's notice ; one containing pigeons, and the other filled with flowers. The birds, it appears, had got loose during Quinten's struggle with Hagendorf, and, true to their instinct, had winged their way across the river, and returned to Clara's cottage. She was surprised, on returning home, to find them there ; but as she had received an invitation to the Baron's that night, she determined to take them with her and leave them with a friend, to be returned the next morning to Quinten. The advent of a being so radiant and blooming as the flower-girl, diffused additional joy through the apartment, already so full of mirth and cheerfulness ; while her flowers spread an atmosphere of fragrance round her, which made it quite a luxury to stand in her vicinity. Among the flowers was a beautiful wreath, woven by her own fair fingers, and intended as a present to lady Anna. This was most graciously received, and the remaining contents of the basket thrown among the guests to scramble for.



Then came the delightful moment of choosing partners for the dance, and the company were seen pairing off two by two, and sliding, as if by magic, into their respective places. Old Peter Sneyders, who now began to feel the liquor tingling at his finger-ends, took his stand on a little elevation in the corner, and bending his head a little to one side, accomplished that night greater wonders by the aid of resin and cat-gut, than has ever been effected in modern times by Strauss or Paganini. In fact, his performance was perfectly enchanting. Even the toothless old housewives and pursy old burghers, inspired with uncontrollable joyousness, were borne along by the stream of melody, and incontinently fell to capering and kicking up their heels with the best of them. Gracious heaven! what wheeling, what dipping, what crossing over, what turning round in a ring, what lifting up of knees, what cutting of pigeon's wings! The old minstrel was happier than a king; and as his blazing eye wandered over the moving masses beneath him, he felt that deep delight which always attends the exercise of power—he felt himself the master-spirit there—the monarch of the whole assembly, regulating all their most complicated evolutions, by the slightest motion of his fiddlestick.

Soon after the first dance was concluded, Rosa was observed in one corner of the room in close tête-a-tête, with a fine-looking, blond-haired youth, with teeth as white as ivory, and eyes of remarkable beauty and brilliancy. This was no other than the oak-carver, Jean Hoffmeyer. Their hands were clasped together, and their cheeks so close, as almost to be touching.



They had forgotten any one else was present, and each seemed absorbed in the contemplation of the other. But the corner, though dark, could not screen them from the eyes of the Baron, who possessed all a painter's quickness in spying out the picturesque.

"By the shade of Van Eyk," exclaimed the old gentleman, rubbing his hands and smiling beneficently, two beautiful pictures! And I swear, by the head of Titania, that ere morning, both shall be framed in the same case."

"Ha! a case of carved oak, I suppose," said Mary Meyerly, tossing back her pretty head, and laughing violently at her own supposed wit.

"Oak, if you choose, Mary," answered the Baron, twitching the long heavy purse which dangled at his belt; "oak, if you choose, but not without a deal of pretty gilding withal."

And so it happened, in good sooth, for when the priest arrived, and had united together Quinten and Anna Van Vriedt as closely as marriage vow and mutual love could bind them, the old gentleman had to make use of but little persuasion to induce Rosa and her lover to submit to the same delightful ceremony.

The Baron was so enraptured at this, that he nearly leaped out of his skin, and giving the blushing Rosa a hearty smack on the lips, he exclaimed:

"Odd's fish! I am almost tempted to get married again myself."

"And so am I," cried that arch coquette and eternal tease, Mary Meyerly, seizing by the hand a timid



...king lad, who for a long time past had been alternately repulsed and attracted by her manner, and who had finally given up his suit in utter despair. This time, however, Mary was in right-down good earnest; and no sooner was the next dance concluded, and the priest had refreshed his fatigued spirits with good store of cake and wine, than she followed the example of her mistress, became at last an affectionate, though somewhat capricious, wife.

Long ere this, perhaps, some reader of uncommon astuteness and critical acumen, has clapped his wings, and crowed, and plumed himself on the discovery of a great and glaring oversight. It was stated, if I am not mistaken, in a preceding chapter, that Clara Onderdonk was destined to perform a prominent part in our little drama. And was she not the fourth maiden who, on that happy night, was turned into a bride? And was it not *something* to form one of the members of that "Quadruple Alliance," which was signed by amorous hands, and sealed by burning kisses, and which was destined to be dissolved only by the death of the parties?

After the celebration of the fourth marriage ceremony, all hands passed into the adjoining chamber, where they found prepared for them a most magnificent supper; and as all had fine appetites and were in tip-top spirits, there was such a scene of eating, and drinking, and laughing, and cracking merry jokes, as utterly baffles all description.

After this was over, another dance begun; but this time Quinten and Anna stepped aside from the tumultuous throng, and while all the rest were



wheeling, and leaping, and reveling in all the animal excitement of rapid and rhythmical motion, the two lovers seated themselves in a deep old-fashioned window, which was thrown wide open, and afforded a glorious prospect over the moonlight town, the river Scheldt, green fields beyond, and village spires afar. Sometimes their eyes rolled together over the enchanting view—sometimes they traced the intricate mazes of the dance on the other side—but, for the most part, they were so intensely absorbed in each other's society, so wrapt up in their own sweet thoughts and waking visions, that, forgetful any one else was present, and deeming themselves all alone and unobserved, they yielded to the gentle promptings of nature and love, and then there took place a mutual pressure of lips, so soft, so sweet, so innocent, that angels might have looked on and envied.

But it is now time to bring my narrative to a close. The remainder of Quinten's life belongs to the history of his art. His pictures are still the admiration of his native city, and one of them has even found its way to Rome, where it ornaments the gallery of one of Italy's most illustrious noblemen. His tombstone is visited every year by thousands of travelers; and if none of them has taken the trouble to tell the story of his early love, it is, perhaps, because none, except "ourselves," has had the good fortune to meet with the kind-hearted and communicative antiquary, who furnished the facts and incidents just recorded.

THE END.



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